

Notice of Meeting



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Scrutiny Commission

Tuesday, 28 November 2023 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

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Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday, 20 November 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

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Agenda - Scrutiny Commission to be held on Tuesday, 28 November 2023 (continued)

- To:** Councillors Carolyne Culver (Chairman), Dominic Boeck (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Paul Dick, Ross Mackinnon, Geoff Mayes, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Christopher Read, Dennis Benneyworth, Clive Hooker, Paul Kander and Biyi Oloko
- Substitutes:** Councillors Jeremy Cottam, Billy Drummond, Stuart Gourley, David Marsh, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston
- Other Officers & Members invited:** Councillors Dennis Benneyworth, Heather Codling, Iain Cottingham, Lee Dillon, Clive Hooker, Paul Kander, Biyi Oloko, and Martha Vickers, and AnnMarie Dodds, Joseph Holmes, April Peberdy, and Dave Wraight.

Agenda

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1. Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	7 - 8
2. Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Commission held on 14 September 2023 and 11 October 2023.	9 - 34
3. Actions from previous Minutes To receive an update on actions following previous Commission meetings.	35 - 36
4. Declarations of Interest To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct .	37 - 38
5. Petitions Purpose: To consider any petitions requiring an Officer response.	39 - 40
6. Items called-in following the meeting of the Executive on 2 November 2023 Purpose: To consider any items called-in by the requisite number of Members following the meeting of the Executive on 2 November 2023.	41 - 64



Agenda - Scrutiny Commission to be held on Tuesday, 28 November 2023 (continued)

7. **Fostering in West Berkshire** 65 - 94
Purpose: To provide an oversight of the recruitment, remuneration and initiatives that are both taking place and planned with foster carers in West Berkshire.
8. **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework** 95 - 238
Purpose: To present a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework for the Scrutiny Commission to review prior to going to Executive for approval on 14 December 2023..
9. **2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two** 239 - 268
Purpose: To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets. This report is Quarter Two for the 2023/24 financial year. The report is highlighting the financial position at each quarter of the financial year and impact on the Council's General Fund position. This allows the Executive and Scrutiny Commission to consider the implications and the actions being taken to mitigate and manage the position.
10. **Health Scrutiny Committee Update** 269 - 270
Purpose: To receive an update from the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee.
11. **Appointment of Task and Finish Groups** 271 - 272
Purpose: To agree Terms of Reference and/or Membership for any Task and Finish Groups that the Scrutiny Commission may wish to appoint to undertake in-depth scrutiny reviews.
12. **Sports Hub, Monks Lane, Newbury** 273 - 346
Purpose: To consider the decision of the Executive in relation to the future of the Sports Hub proposal at Monks Lane in Newbury and decide whether the Scrutiny Commission would like to review any aspect of the proposal.
13. **Thames Water Update** 347 - 348
To provide an update on activities following the Thames Water and Environment Agency review on 11 October 2023.
14. **West Berkshire Council Executive Forward Plan** 349 - 372
Purpose: To advise the Commission of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council's Executive and decide whether to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the Forward Plan.
15. **Scrutiny Commission Work Programme** 373 - 390
Purpose: To receive new items and agree and prioritise the work programme of the Commission.



Part II

16. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RECOMMENDATION: That members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information of the description contained in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 specified in brackets in the heading of each item. [Section 10 of Part 10 of the Constitution applies.](#)

17. **Property Investment Strategy (EX4402)**

391 - 396

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person.)

Purpose: To consider any items called-in by the requisite number of Members following the meeting of the Executive on 2 November 2023.

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.



Agenda Item 1.

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Item 1 – Apologies

Verbal Item

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DRAFT

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

SCRUTINY COMMISSION**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Councillors Present: Carlyne Culver (Chairman), Dominic Boeck (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Ross Mackinnon, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Christopher Read, Stuart Gourley (Substitute) (In place of Geoff Mayes) and Howard Woollaston (Substitute) (In place of Paul Dick)

Councillors Attending Remotely: Councillor Iain Cottingham (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Corporate Services)

Also Present: DCI Emily Evans, Paul Coe (Executive Director - People), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer - Democratic Services and Scrutiny) and Vicky Phoenix (Principal Policy Officer - Scrutiny)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Dick, Councillor Geoff Mayes, Councillor Martha Vickers, Supt Helen Kenny and Nigel Lynn

PART I**18. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 20 June 2023 and 17 July 2023 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. Actions from previous Meetings

Members noted the updates on actions from the previous meetings.

In relation to the Call-In of the Executive Decision on Newbury Sports Hub (revised costs and permission to sign the Development Management Agreement), it was noted that the Commission had asked for costs to be provided. Officers had confirmed that a report would go to Executive in November, and that this would not come back to the Scrutiny Commission, which was the correct process.

The Chairman had attended the meeting of the Executive on 6 July 2023 where the Scrutiny Commission's recommendations in relation to the call-in had been presented. She had read out a statement to say that she was unhappy with the report, which she felt conflated the content of the call-in with the Scrutiny Commission resolution. The report had not been approved by her nor the Executive Portfolio Holder, and it was requested that this be addressed for future reports from the Scrutiny Commission. Also, she requested that where multiple officers contributed to a report, all names should be included on the report, or it should be changed to the most senior officer who signed it off.

Members noted that Mr Alan Pearce had written to the Leader, Scrutiny Commission Chairman and Chief Executive seeking reimbursement of his legal costs for the judicial review. The Western Area Planning Committee had been told that the Sports Hub would be a replacement for the Faraday Road facility, but District Planning Committee had been told that it would not be a replacement. Two reports to Executive had indicated it was a

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replacement, but at the Judicial Review, the Council had stated that it was not a replacement. The Chairman indicated that it was the role of the Scrutiny Commission to hold the Executive to account and to be transparent.

It was noted that there was still money in the Capital Budget for the Sports Hub and planning permission was extant. It was suggested that the Commission may wish to review this matter again after the next meeting of the Executive and call witnesses as part of that review. A previous call-in request in January 2022 had asked for a Task and Finish Group to be set up to review the Sports Hub. The Chairman indicated that she would discuss this with Councillor Lee Dillon, who had been one of Members who had submitted that call-in request.

The Chairman indicated that she would be briefed by officers on the Executive report on the Sports Hub, and she undertook to share any figures about costs incurred with the other Members of the Commission and give them the opportunity to provide feedback.

20. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

21. **Petitions**

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

22. **Crime and Disorder Committee - Community Safety Update**

Paul Coe (Interim Executive Director – People) and DCI Emily Evans (Thames Valley Police) presented the Community Safety Update (Agenda Item 6).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Residents wanted 20 mph speed limits in Eastbury and Lambourn High Street, and to reduce the speed limit to 40 mph on sections of the B4000, but there was opposition from Thames Valley Police (TVP). Members also asked about enforcement of speeding and traffic offences.
- It was confirmed that the Traffic Team was shared with Hampshire Police. Although they did carry out enforcement, it was more challenging for them to cover villages. Neighbourhood Teams also carried out enforcement on occasions. The Police could respond to local concerns about safety by campaigning for reductions in speed limits and Members were encouraged to contact their local sergeant. The Police also supported community speed watch initiatives.
- Members highlighted ongoing drugs problems in Lambourn.
- It was explained that the Police relied on local intelligence, particularly in smaller villages. Sharing information allowed them to target particular areas. Patrols were being stepped up in parts of Hungerford in response to local issues with drugs.
- Members requested details of officers in the local neighbourhood teams.

Action: DCI Evans to provide details of neighbourhood officers.

- Speeding issues on A339 Sandford Link were highlighted as a concern and there had been a recent fatality there. Also, issues with speeding were highlighted on Lambourn Road and Grove Road. Members asked about the use of speed enforcement vans.

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- It was confirmed that TVP did not use speed enforcement vans, but they did undertake patrols. This was reliant on having the right number of officers. Due to the uplift in officers, the recent focus had been on supporting front-line teams.
- It was noted that the Home Secretary had said that every theft should be investigated, but the Chair of the Police Federation had indicated that officers were “stretched beyond human limits”. Members asked if TVP had sufficient resources and sought assurance that local thefts would be investigated.
- TVP stated that all burglaries to dwellings were attended by Police officers. Where possible, the Burglary Team attended in the first instance to collect evidence. A recent burglary in Speen had been linked to a Slough offender who had subsequently been arrested. Statements would always be taken for thefts where there was a witness. TVP used a triage system – lower level offences may have a slower response, but they would always be investigated. Although TVP was stretched, crime levels were manageable.
- Members appreciated the PCSOs in their areas, but asked for greater notice of surveys in future to allow messages to be disseminated within the community.
- Issues were highlighted with young men racing cars on Sunday evenings through Aldermaston ward. This had been raised with TVP previously, but Members had been informed that there was little that could be done. However, Members felt that intelligence could be gathered about their activities to stop this activity.
- Members were encouraged to report offences as they occurred. If vehicle descriptions could be reported to officers then they could act quickly to disrupt activity. TVP also had access to automatic number plate cameras, which could help to trace vehicles.
- A question was asked about how frequently ‘ask for Angela’ was used by women locally.
- This was not thought to have been used locally. Although some sexual offences did occur, victims tended to seek help in other ways. ‘Ask for Angela’ had been tested locally and the test had been successful.
- Members asked if there had been a rise in shoplifting connected to the rising cost of living.
- It was confirmed that shoplifting had increased and this was thought to be linked to the rising cost of living. Officers were unable to attend as easily as in the past due to lower numbers, but responded where they could. TVP was working closely with key retail partners. Larger retailers often had their own security.
- It was noted that nationally, the number of speeding convictions had doubled, but Members felt that the uplift in offences may be even higher. Information was sought as to local trends for all categories of motoring offences and what enforcement action was being taken by Thames Valley Police. Members also asked about the number of offences that resulted in a court summons.
- TVP indicated that data could be analysed by offence type and disposal (e.g., ticket, court summons, etc).
- Members asked about the recording of violent crimes and if they were broken down by demographics.
- It was confirmed that demographic information was captured when recording violent crime data, allowing it to be analysed in different ways.

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- In relation to house closures, Members asked if this simply displaced the problem to another location.
- This was considered an effective intervention, which allowed individuals to be monitored more closely. Also moving them out of the area away from friends / associates limited their opportunity to travel back in and commit crime.
- Concerns were expressed about safety around the weir near Victoria Park in Newbury and a recent death that had occurred there.
- It was confirmed that there were no suspicious circumstances in the recent death. The water flow was very fast near the weir, and it was difficult to get out if a person fell in. Signs and barriers had been put up to improve safety at key locations, but it was difficult to make such a large area safe.

Resolved to note the report.

23. **Revenue Financial Performance Report - Quarter One 2023/24**

Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources) presented the Revenue Financial Performance Report for Quarter One 2023/24 (Agenda Item 7).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members asked for clarification about the financial pressures facing the Planning Service.
- It was explained that fees did not cover the cost of processing planning applications, resulting in a subsidy to the taxpayer of around £5 million per year nationally. Planning fees were set by central government and a bill was going through Parliament seeking to increase them, but this had been delayed. The uplift in fees had been expected earlier in the year, so an in-year financial pressure had resulted.
- Concerns were expressed that the Council may not have sufficient funds to achieve its net zero carbon emissions ambitions, and it was suggested that the wording in the Environmental Impacts section of the report should be amended to reflect this.
- Officers felt that the short-term environmental impact related to this particular paper would not affect the Council's net zero ambitions. This would be more relevant for the budget reports for 2024/25.
- Members asked what assets the Council was looking to sell, and whether care homes may be sold.
- It was stated that all assets were under review. Assets not currently in use could be realised more quickly. Any proposals would require Executive approval. It was confirmed that the sale of care homes was not being considered at this time.
- There was a question about the impact of the People Directorate's recruitment and retention programme.
- Officers indicated that this was starting to be effective with an increase in the number of permanent staff and a reduction in agency staff. Monthly agency spend with Commensura had fallen from around £750,000 per month to circa £570,000. There had been positive articles in the trade press about the benefits of working at West Berkshire Council. The change was considered to be a step in the right direction, but more work was needed.
- Members noted that the biggest overspend was in Children's and Family Services. There was little that could be done to reduce placement and legal costs, which meant

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that agency costs had to be the key focus. Members asked what factors were proving attractive in recruiting permanent staff.

- 26 agency staff had transferred to permanent roles in the last four months. The new Talent Attraction Business Partner was felt to be instrumental in encouraging new staff to join the Council. Officers also highlighted that the Council was trying to grow its fostering and adoption offer, since this was cheaper than residential homes, with better outcomes for children.
- Members asked about recruitment outside the Commensura contract.
- Spend on agency staff was around £12 million in 2022/23, of which nearly £10 million was through the Commensura contract. Reasons for recruiting through other providers included: the need to recruit to specialist posts; and the need to recruit rapidly during the pandemic or in response to unexpected changes in government policy. The Financial Review Panel (FRP) was key to managing agency spend and figures would be better in Q2 and Q3.
- Members asked about the level of inflation provided for within the revenue budget.
- It was explained that different levels of inflation were used for different elements. Contracts were usually linked to CPI or RPI at particular points in the year (e.g., Waste Contract used the RPIX figure in January, which was 14.2%). The Council had greater control over non-contract spend (e.g., Adult Social Care was below 3%). Energy inflation had risen steeply, but it was now falling. It was noted that the staff pay deal had yet to be agreed.
- There was a question as to why all pressures relating to demand-led services had not been built into the budget.
- The pressures mostly related to Adult Social Care. The model produced a wide assessment of the best and worst case scenarios. The budget was set just below the mid-point, because inflation had been forecast to fall quite quickly. However, it had not fallen as quickly as Bank of England (BoE) / Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts. The budget had been set through discussion with the political administration at that time.
- Members asked what would have happened if the Council had not taken the step of introducing the FRP to reduce spending.
- It was confirmed that the overspend forecast would have been higher, but it was hard to quantify the level of impact, other than in relation to agency spending. The approach was designed to prioritise essential spending and protect vulnerable residents.
- Members challenged whether the modelling and budget setting processes were fit for purpose.
- It was acknowledged that a £7 million overspend would use nearly all of the Council's general fund reserves. The number of children in care had increased unexpectedly from 166 at the start of last year to 209 in June 2023. Some of these placements cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. There had also been an increase in the number of children with Health and Care Plans, which had driven cost pressures in the Education Service. The Council had traditionally operated with low levels of reserves and tight financial controls. The current pressures were seen as a 'perfect storm' of factors coming together. It was highlighted that other councils were facing similar pressures.

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- Given that numbers in care had been rising for years, this suggested that a different way of modelling demand was needed.
- Officers indicated that the modelling results were based on the data available at the time the budget was set. The model produced best and worst case scenarios. However, numbers of children in care were at a historical high and long-term trends were much lower, so the increase had not been predicted.
- It was suggested that preventative measures should be put in place.
- Members noted that forecasts were rarely accurate and could not foresee unprecedented levels of volatility. It was accepted that the model was flawed, but it was the best tool available.
- With regards to budgeting, it was noted that decisions about future changes in inflation were made in relation to the BoE / OBR forecasts. There had been no secrecy in how the budget had been put together. Opposition Members had had the chance to proposed amendments in relation to the budget last March, but none had been sought.
- It was highlighted that the FRP brought additional scrutiny and oversight to the process of spending public money. The Council had acted quickly when the projected overspend had been identified. Every week, proposed spending was reviewed line by line. Agency workers had been reduced from 178 to 154. There had been issues with some old invoices emerging and some spend without supporting purchase orders, but financial discipline was now being imposed. In relation to the forecast spend, it was accepted that some additional sensitivity analysis could have been carried out and there was a commitment to look at this for next year's budget. It was confirmed that the Council would work with its auditors to ensure that hit its zero overspend target. There was lots still to do in terms of understanding what was driving cost increases. For example, in relation to early help, it was highlighted that West Berkshire had fewer officers than in Bracknell and Wokingham who were working to reduce the number of children who needed to go into care.
- Members asked if the recruitment freeze applied across all levels of the Council. Also, there was a question about recruitment in other local authorities and whether small unitary authorities struggled to attract staff who could earn more elsewhere.
- It was confirmed that the FRP considered all recruitment requests. There was not a freeze on recruitment and roles were being advertised. It was accepted that some staff left to get more money elsewhere, but equally West Berkshire sometimes recruited on the basis that it paid higher salaries. The issue of staff leaving to seek more pay was not thought to be any worse than in previous years.
- Clarification was sought whether the number of agency staff had reduced just in Children's Services, or across the board. It was confirmed that the reduction related to all agency staff.
- Members asked if the reduction in agency staff would lead to an increase in children's social workers' caseloads.
- It was stated that there was a push to make agency workers permanent members of staff and there had been some success with this. Saving were not being made by increasing caseloads. Although gaps were accepted in some services, this was not the case with children's social workers.

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- It was stressed that children were only taken into care when necessary. West Berkshire appeared to be an outlier compared to other local authorities and Members asked if officers understood why.
- Officers indicated that timely, proactive intervention could help families from reaching crisis and children being taken into care. Other local authorities had a broader / more robust / better resources provision. There was a question about how best to invest in the service. The Council had sought expert external advice. This had suggested that there was no single solution, but lots of small changes should have the desired effect.
- Members asked for the Q1 deficit figures.
- The Q1 figures were highlighted in the appendix.
- There was a challenge around whether the Council should run its own care homes, or if there was a more economic way of working.
- It was explained that a Strategy Board had been held with Members to review this and further work was planned to consider the pros and cons of different approaches.
- Members asked if the LGA or the government was suggesting that local authorities should be looking at a range of scenarios (e.g., the equal pay claim faced by Birmingham City Council).
- The Executive report included details of what would happen if spend was to exceed the level of reserves. The Council would seek a capitalisation directive from the government. Other local authorities had done this and had had them approved (e.g., Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole). Birmingham and several other local authorities had issued S114 notices, which stopped all non-essential spending. Ideally, the Council would not get to either of these positions. A break even position was recognised as difficult to achieve, but as a minimum, the Council needed to ensure that the overspend was greatly reduced. Government had recently consulted on their proposals for best value and the next step for councils to consider.
- It was suggested that rising unemployment could affect residents' ability to pay their Council Tax and officers were asked if this had been considered.
- It was confirmed that Council Tax and Business Rates collection rates were holding up well, but this was recognised as something that needed to be monitored, and it was discussed as part of the budget setting process.
- Members noted the restrictions on overtime, but asked about emergencies (e.g., social care).
- Officers indicated that there were exceptions to the overtime ban.
- It was highlighted that officers may find it difficult to take time off in lieu if they were having to cover for vacant posts.
- It was confirmed that this was considered by the FRP and where possible measures were put in place to ensure that staff worked their contracted hours. This was being monitored to ensure that the Council was complying with health and safety legislation.
- There was a question about the potential to address rising home to school transport costs.
- It was highlighted that children with Health and Care Plans often had associated transport needs. Costs had gone up by 15% in the last year and accounted for around £4m per year. A review had been commissioned to identify potential savings.
- Clarification was sought as to what was involved with seeking capital directives.

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- Officers indicated that government would ask questions around benchmarking of costs, auditing of accounts, levels of reserves, sources of pressures, etc. The Minister would issue a 'minded to' capitalisation directive of £Xm and the Council would be subjected to a review through the Department for Housing and Levelling Up. Subject to the outcome of the review, the Minister would then issue the capitalisation directive. The Council would need to repay this through additional capital receipts or there would be an additional charge on top of interest rates charged by the Public Works Loan Board.
- Members asked about lessons learned through the FRP.
- There was a strict rule around no payments without purchase orders, which had been an issue with some agency staff. Most expenditure requests were approved, but some were rejected, or further information was requested. Officers were getting used to providing supporting evidence for spend. It had been a journey for the FRP and for officers. It had helped to reinforce that money was tight and it was suggested that this may become 'business as usual'.

RESOLVED to note the report.

24. **Capital Financial Performance Report - Quarter One 2023/24**

Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources) presented the Capital Financing Report for Financial Year 2023/24 Quarter One (Agenda Item 8).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members asked how the Council's borrowing to income ratio compared to those of other local authorities.
- It was noted that the Officer for Local Government (Oflog) had this information on its website. West Berkshire was towards the top of the fourth quartile or bottom of the third quartile. Some of the local authorities towards the top of the list were those who had featured in the news in recent weeks.
- Clarification was sought as to why the Council was 'overborrowed'.
- Officers indicated that the Council had not undertaken borrowing in the last four years apart for the Community Bond. This was because a number of schemes had been delayed. Also, during Covid, the Council had a strong cash balance, which prevented the need to borrow. Delaying long-term borrowing was beneficial, since current interest rates were higher than they had been recently.
- A question was asked about the extent to which borrowing costs were exposed to shocks in the financial system.
- It was confirmed that borrowing rates were fixed at low interest rates. The Council did undertake some short-term borrowing for cash flow purposes. In the longer term, interest rates were forecast to fall and the Council did not want to be tied into higher rates in the long-term. It was noted that some local authorities were overexposed to higher short-term rates.
- It was noted that no reprofiling had been requested. Members asked if there was a cut-off date for requests in order not to lose the funding.
- It was explained that the Council had moved to a 10 year capital strategy, which offered additional flexibility for the capital programme. Requests for reprofiling had to be made before year end. Requests were approved through the Executive and would come through the Scrutiny Commission.

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- Members asked about the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) scheme.
- Officers indicated that some funding had been received for the LRIE scheme from the Local Enterprise Partnership and this would be used before the Council's own funds. Securing external grants was a common reason for reprofiling spend.
- A question was asked about why funds had been reprofiled for Brookfields School and whether this would have an impact on SEND children.
- It was confirmed that the school was in a more positive position with respect to its own capital reserves, so there had been a discussion about who was going to pay for what elements. As a result, the Council's spend had been pushed back.
- Members noted that the SEND Strategy Infrastructure Delivery had been pushed back and asked why.
- Officers indicated that options were being considered for this, including delivering better value through the government. However, the Council was committed to spend in this area.
- Concern was expressed about deferring IT spend, and Members sought reassurance around security patching and ongoing support.
- Officers confirmed that their support would be provided. It was highlighted that there had been significant investment in IT. In some cases, underspends were because projects had come in under-budget. It was stressed that IT security risks were near the top of the corporate risk register and the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services had regular briefings from the Acting Head of IT. Reassurance was provided that the Council would not jeopardise IT security by postponing capital spend.
- It was noted that the spend on Theale Railway Station had been reprofiled, however, work at the station was progressing well and the scheme was forecast to be completed by the winter. Officers were asked to double check the need for funds to be reprofiled.

Action: Joseph Holmes to confirm Theale Station project timeline with Councillor Ross Mackinnon.

- A question was asked about what resources were required to deliver the project listed in paragraph 7.1 of the report.
- Officers indicated that this related to project resource – officers were currently acting up or had been promoted, leaving gaps. The Council was seeking to recruit to the vacant project posts.

RESOLVED to note the report.

25. **Appointment of Task and Finish Groups**

The Commission considered appointments to task and finish groups and any associated terms of reference (Agenda Item 9)

It was noted that Members of the Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group would be:

- Councillor Dominic Boeck
- Councillor Carolyne Culver
- Councillor Patrick Clark
- Councillor Paul Dick
- Councillor Erik Pattenden

Councillor Dominic Boeck volunteered to act as Chairman of the Task and Finish Group.

It was noted that the Task Group was originally scheduled to meet in September, but this had to be pushed back to October for various reasons. Conversations had started with officers regarding evidence for the first session.

Action: Gordon Oliver to liaise with Councillor Dominic Boeck regarding the Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group.

26. Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The Chairman read out the following update from Councillor Martha Vickers on the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 10):

“On Tuesday this week, the Health Scrutiny Committee met for the second time this municipal year. The two substantive items on the agenda were Access to Primary Care and Continuing Healthcare.

“Representatives from Primary Care and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) presented papers and answered Members questions. The key issues discussed regarding Access to Primary Care included the Capacity and Access Improvement Plan, the use of Additional Roles, and communications with the public. The Continuing Healthcare item focussed on the peer review report and the ICB updated Members on the progress with the All Age Continuing Care Transformation Plan.

“There were also updates provided by the ICB and Healthwatch West Berkshire.

“The next Health Scrutiny Committee is on 12 December 2023. On the agenda will be children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing, and maternal mental health. The Health Scrutiny Committee is in the process of determining the work programme for meetings in 2024. Members are welcome to put forward suggestions for items to be considered in the work programme.”

Members were advised to contact Councillor Vickers directly if they had any questions about the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED to note the update.

27. West Berkshire Council Executive Forward Plan 1 August 2023 to 30 November 2023

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Executive Forward Plan for the period covering 1 August to 30 November 2023 (Agenda Item 11).

There was a question about what constituted a key decision. This was a decision that would have a significant impact on more than one ward, and / or a spend of £500,000 or more.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

28. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year (Agenda Item 12).

Members noted the following:

- A proposal had come from Corporate Board for the Scrutiny Commission to review the Council’s proposals to improve Recruitment of Foster Carers.

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- A work planning session was planned for 19 September with Members of the Executive, senior officers, and Scrutiny Commission Members. This would make use of the PAPER methodology.
- Members highlighted the Libraries Service as a topic for review. It was noted that the service was stretched because some parish councils were not contributing financially. The requested contributions represented a significant proportion of the parish councils' precepts, and contributions were seen as double taxation. Some parishes had contributed to secure the mobile library service. It was noted that data was available about the number of residents in each parish who used the libraries. Members were discouraged from solely focusing on parish contributions. It was suggested that a minimum service could be to retain Newbury Library and close the others, but that would be unacceptable. Members noted that the service was last reviewed in 2017.

Action: Gordon Oliver to discuss the issues raised in relation to the Libraries Service with the Culture and Libraries Manager.

- Residents had highlighted concerns about Royal Mail. Some areas were only getting post once a week. It was noted that the Royal Mail could be asked to attend, but could not be compelled to do so.

Action: Gordon Oliver to make an initial approach to the Royal Mail regarding attendance at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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DRAFT

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

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2023

Councillors Present: Carolyne Culver (Chairman), Dominic Boeck (Vice-Chairman), Paul Dick, Geoff Mayes, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Christopher Read and Stuart Gourley (Substitute) (In place of Antony Amirtharaj)

Also Present: Councillor David Marsh, Councillor Clive Hooker, Councillor Matt Shakespeare, Councillor Howard Woollaston (representing Lambourn Valley Flood Forum) [remote], Richard Aylard (Thames Water), Nikki Hines (Thames Water), Karen Nelson (Thames Water), Dave Willis (Environment Agency), Pete Devery (River Action), Charlotte Hitchmough (Action for River Kennet), Martyn Wright (East Garston Flood and Pollution Forum), Keith Hoddinott (Thatcham Flood Forum), Kay Lacey (Pang Valley Flood Forum), Paula Saunderson (Newbury Flood Forum) [remote], Jon Winstanley (Service Director - Environment), Paul Bacchus (Principal Engineer - Drainage and Flood Risk), Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer - Scrutiny & Dem Services) and Benjamin Ryan (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Antony Amirtharaj, Councillor Ross Mackinnon and James Bentley

PART I

29. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

30. Thames Water and Environment Agency

Councillor Carolyne Culver introduced the item on Thames Water and the Environment Agency (Agenda Item 3).

Richard Aylard CVO (Sustainability Director) and Karen Nelson (Network Operations Manager) gave a presentation on behalf of Thames Water, which was an updated version of the presentation circulated with the agenda. Key points from the presentation are summarised below:

- Thames Water had received many questions and offered pick these up separately if they were not answered in the meeting.
- Leadership changes at Thames Water were summarised.
- Thames Water's financial position was outlined:
 - £14bn of debt set against an asset base of £19bn.
 - 97% of debt was fixed in real terms so exposure to rising debt costs was limited.
 - The company had a strong liquidity position, with £3.6bn of cash and committed funding.

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- To support a turnaround plan, shareholders had provided £500m of new equity and committed a further £750m by 2025.
- £2.5bn of additional equity support would be provided between 2025 and 2030.
- This was in addition to significant overspending by Thames Water in both the previous and current periods.
- Although spend was less than required, it was more than had been allowed for by the regulator when they set the bills for these periods. Around 25% of any overspend was charged to customers, and 75% to shareholders.
- The draft five-year plan for 2025-2030 was explained:
 - A record level of investment of £18bn was proposed (a 40% increase). This was considered to be the maximum that would be both affordable for customers and deliverable by Thames Water.
 - £6.6bn was proposed for environmental improvements, of which £885m was for reducing storm overflows.
 - It was noted that the plan was subject to change following discussions with regulators – it was expected that the plan would be finalised in a year's time.
- Targets for improving environmental performance by 2030 included:
 - 22% reduction in leakage.
 - 30% reduction in pollution incidents.
 - 28% reduction in storm overflows.
 - 15% reduction in sewer blockages.
 - Generating 295GWh from renewable sources.
- Implications for household water bills were summarised:
 - For every £1 of customer's bills, 48p would fund infrastructure improvements and 20p would fund operational costs.
 - A document was available on the Thames Water website which provided further detail.
- In relation to storm discharges:
 - Thames Water had been the first water company to set targets for reducing discharges - 50% reduction in total duration and 80% reduction in sensitive catchments. Reducing total duration was felt to be better than reducing the number of discharges, but central government had since set a target of 10 overflows per year on average by 2050. Thames Water had reworked its targets on this basis. A 24% reduction was proposed for 2030. Figures would be averaged across 10 years. Last year, the 2030 target was achieved because it was a very dry year.
 - In relation to dry discharges, it was noted that there was no standard definition of what constituted a 'dry day'.
 - If a sewage works was discharging, it was because it was receiving more flow than it could treat. This could be due to rainfall or groundwater infiltration. Any discharges due to prolonged groundwater infiltration would be very dilute.
 - There were plans to expand sewage treatment works at Bucklebury and Chapel Row. Foam observed in local streams, may have been due to

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detergent (white foam) or excess nutrients (brown / off-white foam). Nutrients could be naturally occurring or from treated or untreated sewage discharges. Each case needed to be reviewed to determine the cause.

- The sewage treatment process was described:
 - Unwanted items were screened out at the inlet and taken to landfill, with grit from road run-off also removed.
 - Sewage was passed to a primary settlement tank – resulting sludge was taken away and used for renewable energy.
 - Sewage was then passed to filter beds to remove ammonia and increase oxygen levels.
 - A humus tank was then used to remove remaining fine particles before being passed for tertiary treatment using a mechanical filter.
 - Clean effluent could then be discharged to the watercourse.
 - Effluent was routinely tested for key pollutants, but not for bacteria unless there were designated bathing water sites downstream.
 - Excess sewage arriving at a treatment works would automatically overflow to storm tanks and would be held there until there was spare capacity available.
 - Once storm tanks were full and if flows still exceeded capacity, then there was no option but to discharge to watercourses. Effluent would be screened and solids removed, but it would not have been subject to biological treatment.
 - Thames Water did not consider it acceptable to discharge untreated sewage to watercourses and was working to prevent this entirely.
- Reasons for increased flows in sewers included:
 - Infiltrations – these difficult to find due to the size of the network and the narrow window in which they could be detected.
 - Misconnections – surface water drains were sometimes connected to foul sewers by mistake or to save money.
 - Inundation – surface water entering through manhole covers.
 - Physical damage to sewers
 - Unauthorised connections
- Finding and fixing infiltration:
 - Lessons had been learned from 2012/13 which had been wet years, and the team had been restructured in 2019.
 - There was a small window in which to find infiltration – water levels in sewers were monitored closely and cameras were deployed.
 - Balloon stoppers could be used to hold back flows and facilitate investigations, with tankers used to manage upstream flows.
 - Flows were managed through the winter months to minimise discharges to the environment.
 - Groundwater levels were monitored to help predict when problems would occur.
 - Thames Valley had 243 catchments - each of these behaved differently.

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- In Lambourn, groundwater usually peaked in January, but there had been a second peak in March this year.
- The window for carrying out repairs was May to October.
- Repairs at one location could cause additional leaks to form elsewhere.
- Private pumping to sewers by property owners was a problem and could lead to downstream flooding.
- Four options to reduce discharges of untreated sewage:
 - Direct surface water away from sewers.
 - Stop infiltration by lining sewers and sealing manholes.
 - Increase capacity at sewage works – this would be inefficient for most of the year.
 - Build more storm tanks – suitable for short-term rainfall events not long-term infiltration.
- Interactive map:
 - Showed live information about discharges from treatment works.
 - Good feedback received.
 - Thames Water hoped to add cumulative records for the year to date and records for the previous week.
- Schemes being delivered in West Berkshire:
 - Kintbury - £2m upgrade to treatment works.
 - East Shefford - £10 million scheme to tackle phosphorous reduction and improve flow.
 - Hungerford - £5 million works to improve ability to treat flow and increase storm capacity.
 - Approved schemes at Aldermaston, Beenham, Bucklebury, Chapel Row, Chieveley, Hampstead Norreys, Newbury and Pangbourne, with additional information on the Thames Water website.
- Future plans:
 - Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan developed for 25 year period.
 - Co-created with local authorities and other stakeholders.
 - Broken down into 5 year business plans.
 - Aimed to reduce sewage spills to an average of 24 per year by 2025 and an average of 17 per year by 2030.
- Groundwater:
 - Catchments to the north and west had a chalk bedrock geology where groundwater infiltration was widespread.
 - The Enborne and lower reaches of the Kennet had a clay bedrock geology where infiltration was more localised.
 - Groundwater conditions in Hampstead Norreys over the last three years were discussed. There was a long delay between rainfall and groundwater rising. Works were carried out in the autumn when levels were lowest.

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- Schemes being delivered:
 - Hampstead Norreys, Stanford Dingley, Aldermaston, Compton and East Garston – mostly sealing / lining of sewers and sealing of manhole covers.
 - Also, some operational improvements.
- River Pang:
 - Environment Agency (EA) assessed water quality against a wide range of indicators including fish, invertebrates and ammonia levels. The overall assessment for the river was determined by the worst single indicator.
 - The River Pang had been rated as 'poor' for 2022 because fish stocks were poor when sampled in that year. 2022 had been a hot, dry year and it was suggested that fish had moved about.
 - Significant sewage spills would have affected invertebrates and ammonia levels, but these were rated as 'good'.
 - Major improvements were being carried out at Hampstead Norreys to reduce infiltration and improve the sewage treatment works, which should greatly reduce discharges.
 - A photo had been taken of the River Pang in Pangbourne on 21 September, which showed discoloured water. It was confirmed that there had been no relevant discharges from Hampstead Norreys and it was suggested that the discolouration was due to silt from run-off. Thames Water has since apologised to the Committee for failing to check for discharges from other sewage treatment works. There were untreated discharges from Bucklebury, Chapel Row and Beenham sewage treatment works on that date.
- Planning and development:
 - The Water Industry had lobbied Defra about implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which had still not been enacted. However, Defra was now consulting on this, and a decision was expected in 2024.
 - It was confirmed that the Bockhampton rising main could cope with 150 additional houses. It had previously burst due to corrosion from Hydrogen Sulphide, but the issue had been addressed during the repair.
 - Addressing issues related to developments adjacent to the Vodafone site in Newbury was reliant upon implementation of Section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which Defra had said would be considered after Section 3.
- Reporting pollution:
 - Residents were encouraged to report live pollution incidents via the online tool: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/report-a-problem#/view-and-report-problems>
 - A crew could usually attend within 2 hours, day or night.
 - Reports after the incidents had occurred were much less helpful.
- Defects in Pipes:
 - It was explained that sewers had not been designed to be watertight. Leaks were generally not down to a lack of maintenance, but groundwater conditions

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were different now compared to when the pipes had been built. In groundwater impacted areas sewers were serviceable between April and November. Thames Water had made good progress in tackling issues, but there was still a long way to go.

Dave Willis (Area Environment Manager – Thames Area) gave a presentation on behalf of the Environment Agency. Key points from the presentation were as follows:

- The EA's role in relation to protecting and improving river quality was shaped by the government's Integrated Plan for Clean and Plentiful Water and the Thames River Basin Management Plan. These set out the current status of the water environment and set objectives and priority actions.
- West Berkshire had important chalk streams, including the Kennet and Pang Catchments, which were internationally rare. The National Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy also guided the work of the EA and other organisations. Only 17% of chalk streams in England met 'good' ecological status. The ecological health of our rivers was not where it needed to be, and much work was needed to meet the government's 25 year plan target of 75% of rivers achieving good ecological status.
- Pressures on the water environment were diverse and complex. An integrated approach was needed, and catchment based partnerships were key to tackling the challenge.
- Most rivers in West Berkshire did not achieve 'good' ecological status with key pressures being wastewater and rural diffuse pollution, physical habitat modifications, and changes to natural flows and levels.
- Key activities for the EA included:
 - Responding to serious environmental incidents
 - Environmental monitoring
 - Strategic planning for water quality and resources
 - Environmental permits and associated compliance / enforcement
 - Physical habitat restoration
 - Partnership working, particularly with catchment hosts
- Environmental monitoring programmes included river and groundwater quality / quantity, and river ecology.
- Programmes covered three categories:
 - Proactive national programmes to provide consistent information across England
 - Reactive local monitoring in relation to serious environmental incidents
 - Proactive local monitoring in relation to targeted investigations

Results from the national programmes were published via River Basin Management Plans and the Catchment Data Explorer website.

- EA actions related to water quality pressures included:
 - Serious environmental incident response
 - Regulation of Thames Water (planning, permitting and compliance)
 - Diffuse pollution action plans and farm regulation inspections

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- Action related to water resource pressures included:
 - Serious incident response (e.g., 2022 drought response)
 - Regulation of Thames Water's resource activities
 - Investigations into potential over-abstraction
- Examples of actions in relation to physical habitat restoration included:
 - Collaborative projects to restore river habitats on the Rivers Kennet, Lambourn and Pang
 - River and wetland habitat restoration projects
 - Natural flood management projects
- The EA's role in regulating Thames Water was focused on ensuring that the water companies delivered their environmental responsibilities through:
 - Assessment and reporting of the companies' environmental performance
 - Providing guidance on / assessment of plans to protect and improve the environment
 - Determination of environmental permits and associated compliance assessment / enforcement
- In relation to assessment and reporting of environmental performance, the EA undertook annual performance assessments, which were published each summer and resulted in a one to four star rating. Thames Water received a two star rating in the 2022 assessment, showing that significant improvements in environmental performance were required. Performance on some aspects had declined and the EA had particular concerns about the total number of pollution incidents, the high number of serious pollution incidents and the delay to some key environmental improvement schemes.
- In relation to guidance and assessment of plans, the EA's role included provision of advice to government on a range of water company plans, as well as leading on the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). This was a key part of the five-yearly price reviews by Ofwat. WINEP set out a five-year investment programme of schemes to deliver environmental obligations. Water company plans also included Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans and Water Resources Management Plans. These were vital to set out the companies' plans to protect and improve the environment over the next 25 years.
- Thames Water had recently submitted their draft Business Plan for 2025-2030 to Ofwat, which included the WINEP. These were critical to delivering environmental improvements by 2030 and included implementation of the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, in which chalk streams were designated as high priority sites. The EA would review Thames Water's plans to assess if environmental obligations had been included and would advise government and Ofwat on final plans due to be determined by December 2024.
- The EA's role included determining environmental permits as well as compliance assessment and enforcement. In relation to Thames Water, a wide range of compliance activities were undertaken, including data return assessments, site inspections and site audits. Enforcement action against Thames Water, included successful prosecutions at 17 sites since 2015, resulting in fines of £37 million.

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- There were also a number of live EA investigations at national and local levels, including the largest ever criminal investigation into potential breaches of environmental permit conditions at over 2,000 sewage treatment works by all water companies. Initial investigations suggested widespread and serious non-compliance with environmental permit conditions. The EA was undertaking further investigations on specific sites.
- There were investigations into the nature and extent of storm overflow discharges via assessment of water companies' monitoring data. All storm overflows must be monitored by December 2023.
- A Local investigation into the major pollution incident in Thatcham in 2020 was nearing completion.
- The EA was creating a larger and more specialised workforce using additional funding allocated in the recent spending review to focus further on water company regulation.
- In summary:
 - The ecological quality of rivers in West Berkshire was not where all parties wanted it to be.
 - Issues facing our catchments were varied and complex with no simple solution and considerable investigation, planning and investment was needed to resolve them.
 - Tackling issues in an integrated way was vital – all partners needed to step up to the challenge. The EA would continue to work actively with catchment partners to support this.
 - The EA would continue to hold water companies to account to drive improved environmental performance and investment in operations and assets.
 - The EA planned to increase water company compliance activities and would take appropriate enforcement action.
 - EA staff were committed and cared passionately about protecting and improving the water environment.
 - The EA would need to prioritise their actions and would not be able to fully meet all customer expectations on some issues (e.g., response to lower risk incidents and local environmental monitoring). These activities had been reduced due to reductions in government funding. The EA would continue to make the case for increased funding.

The Thames Water and Environment Agency representatives were questioned by the Scrutiny Commission Members. The responses are summarised below:

- Thames Water confirmed that foul water connections to surface water sewers were acknowledged as a concern, since untreated waste would be discharged to the environment. A specialist team looked for issues based on reports. Once the source had been traced, the property owner was asked to fix the issue. If enforcement was necessary, then that had to be through the local authority. This was more of an issue in London than in West Berkshire.
- Thames Water confirmed that interventions to prevent storm water overflows depended on the particular circumstances of the site. At Hampstead Norreys, works were focused on preventing infiltration, while at some sites, additional capacity may be required to keep up with demand from new housing, but for other sites increased storm tank capacity was needed. The EA was consulted on proposed interventions.

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Thames Water had inherited the sewage works in its area from local authorities – each one was different with no standard model.

- Thames Water confirmed that despite extensive investigations the source of problems at Brimpton remained unclear. There was no option but to use tankers to take away excess flow. Thames Water would continue to investigate the issue this winter. It was confirmed that there was sufficient capacity at the site, so the issue was either due to infiltration or unauthorised pumping into the sewers - often pumps were hidden. Thames Water wanted to work with local communities to identify and address issues.
- Thames Water committed to meet with Councillor Adrian Abbs Executive Portfolio Holder, who had been trying to set up a meeting since May.

Action: Gordon Oliver to send Thames Water contact details for Councillor Abbs.

- It was confirmed that Thames Water did not pay much Corporation Tax, because the government's capital allowances scheme automatically deducted tax for capital expenditure. Further details was provided in the [Our Finances Explained](#) document.
- The emphasis was on profits being reinvested and no dividends had been paid to external shareholders for the last six years – shareholders recognised the need to improve performance for both the environment and customers.
- In response to a question on the EA view of Thames Water's proposed business plan, the EA confirmed that it had been saying for some time that Thames Water needed to increase the scale and pace of its investment to improve its environmental performance. While the EA welcomed the proposed increased scale of Thames Water's latest plans, there would be a lot of scrutiny of the plans by the EA and Ofwat to ensure they were robust and delivered the required obligations, with final determination due by December 2024.
- Thames Water indicated that they would like to achieve a four star rating in the Environment Agency's environmental performance assessment (EPA) as quickly as possible. There was a large backlog of schemes, because investment levels had not been as high as they should have been for the last 10 years. This was partly due to the focus of the financial regulator on keeping bills low – bills had not gone up in real terms in that time. It was going to take time to improve performance, but Thames Water was seeking to achieve the best outcome from the current and subsequent price reviews.
- Thames Water shareholders were putting up capital for improvements and needed to see a return on their investments. Thames Water sought to deliver as much as possible with the money available. While bills would need to increase, social tariffs would be used to ensure that those least able to pay would get a significant reduction on their water bill.
- Thames Water indicated that they were leading the industry in terms of Catchment Partnerships. Three areas had been designated as smarter water catchments as part of a trial, with £3m invested in each one to build capacity and develop a collectively agreed plan. Following the success of this trial, investment was planned for a further 11 partnerships. These gave communities a voice in what happened to their rivers. It was noted that sewage was not the only form of pollution, and other sources needed to be tackled to improve water quality.
- Thames Water explained that each catchment and stretch of river was unique and they were being improved in different ways. For example, in Kintbury, water quality was being improved through tertiary treatment, while in Stanford Dingley efforts were

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focused on reducing phosphorus, and infiltration were being addressed at Hampstead Norreys. Improvements would be delivered in different timescales at different sites. Funding and resources were limited, and priorities had to be determined to deliver improvements as efficiently as possible.

- Thames Water confirmed that discounts of up to £1,800 on water connection charges for new homes were being offered to developers in return for developing water efficient homes. Although there had been some interest, take-up had been slow. Thames Water and local authorities would have to work together to progress this through the Local Plan.

Action: Councillor Carolyn Culver to set up a meeting with planners to review how best to facilitate water efficient homes.

- Thames Water indicated that the sewage works were due to be upgraded at both Burghfield and Mortimer, with additional capacity to reduce sewage discharges in wet weather. The Mortimer upgrade would be completed in late 2024 / early 2025, while Burghfield would be completed in 2026. Infiltration reduction works were also planned for Burghfield.

Action: Thames Water to arrange a site visit for Councillor Geoff Mayes to the Burghfield and Mortimer sewage works.

- Thames Water confirmed that red flags shown on the real-time map were for discharges of untreated effluent - these discharged from a separate outlet to treated effluent.
- Thames Water acknowledged that storm discharges had only been monitored since 2018 and discharges would have been happening for a long time before that, but they were in many cases very dilute, which was why acute impacts had often not been noticed. Causation factors were varied and included infiltration. Infiltration often took a long time to detect and pinpoint, and it could also take time to identify a cost-effective solution. This meant that other measures, such as increasing treatment capacity and building larger storm tanks were sometimes implemented ahead of infiltration reduction.
- Thames Water's Business Plan included smart objectives around the number of kilometres of sewers to be fixed and manholes to be sealed within particular time periods and the regulator was able to impose penalties if these were not achieved.
- In terms of speeding up the pace of delivery, new methods were being trialled to reduce infiltration at two catchments, neither of which were in West Berks. These had yielded good results and would be used at other locations, including Hampstead Norreys. Proving to the regulator that infiltration could be reduced efficiently would help to justify the investment case to do more.
- Thames Water explained that the London Road pumping station pumped sewage to the treatment works that served the whole of Newbury. There had been issues with the rising main (pressurised sewer) in the past, but there had been considerable investment in lining the rising mains and replacing the pipe where it had become corroded. There had been no issues following the repairs. A project team was looking at how to accommodate the major new development at Sandleford. There was a plan to upgrade the London Road pumping station and a route was being worked out, taking account of cost and potential disruption during construction and when future access was needed. It was thought that the upgrade would address flooding issues in the area. Other smaller scale upgrades may also be required at key pinch points.

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Action: Thames Water to set up a meeting with Councillor Stuart Gourley and council officers to discuss the London Road pumping station.

- Thames Water confirmed that lining works in Stanford Dingley were necessary and there would be no detriment as a result. Also, care was taken when sealing manholes to ensure that effluent did not discharge via customers' toilets. Manhole sealing could involve sealing the chamber walls rather than covers. Thames Water committed to investigate whether additional works would also be needed in Frilsham.

Action: Thames Water to confirm the details of proposed manhole sealing in Stanford Dingley to Councillor Christopher Read.

- There was discussion around Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans, which brought water companies, local authorities and landowners together to manage surface water, including stopping it getting into foul sewers. This might include natural flood management schemes. There had been changes to payments to farmers through Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs), where they could be incentivised to temporarily hold water.

Action: Thames Water to send a link to the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan to Councillor Christopher Read.

- In response to a question on whether the EA could use the record water company fines to bolster its enforcement activities, the EA confirmed that there had been fines of £37 million imposed against Thames Water since 2015. However, the fines went to the Treasury rather than the Environment Agency. Looking forwards, there was a government proposal to redirect environmental fines to a national catchment restoration fund in order to improve the water environment. This presented an opportunity for Catchment Partnerships to benefit. The EA was awarded costs in relation to successful prosecutions, and this was used to support operational activities. There were areas where the EA was funded through government grant in aid (GIA) where they were under pressure in terms of what they could deliver (e.g., low-risk pollution incident response, and environmental monitoring). Cases had been put to the Government for increased investment.
- The EA and Thames Water both provided funding to catchment partnerships. The EA was keen to develop citizen science initiatives and various pilot projects were underway. The EA's national monitoring strategy was in development and citizen science would be a key part, but there were still issues to be worked through. Also, there was the potential for the recently announced Defra funding for natural flood management, which could go to catchment partnerships.
- Thames Water's representatives did not have figures available about internal dividends paid, but offered to provide this information. It was confirmed that this was necessary to pay back loans. Shareholders were not taking income from the company.

Action: Thames Water to send details about payment of internal dividends to Councillor Justin Pemberton.

- Thames Water acknowledged that it had a complex ownership structure - around two thirds of its investors were pension funds, while the rest were sovereign wealth funds. However, this meant that they were able to take a long-term view and forego dividend payments in the short-term.
- In response to a question about debt interest rates, Thames Water confirmed that they had a range of bonds with different maturity dates. The company planned ahead and insured itself against interest rate rises. They acknowledged that debt was rising

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because they needed to invest large amounts in upgrading their networks. However, equity was also increasing in order to keep gearing at reasonable levels.

- Clarification was provided by Thames Water regarding government targets to reduce pollution. The target for reducing pollution incidents related to failures such as a burst rising main, blocked sewer, or failure of a sewage works, where there would be an impact on the environment. Thames Water had a Pollution Incident Reduction Plan to address these. The other target was for reducing storm discharges to an average of 10 per year, which related to a properly functioning sewage treatment system.

The Thames Water and Environment Agency representatives were questioned by those other Members present. The responses are summarised below:

- In relation to a question about storm water storage, Thames Water explained that this was used to accommodate additional flows as a result of heavy rainfall. However, it could not cope with increased flows from groundwater infiltration over long periods. Overflow tanks could only be emptied when there was spare capacity. Solutions were often a balance of preventing infiltration, increasing capacity, and increasing storage. Each design was carefully modelled.
- Thames Water confirmed that investigations in Eastbury and East Garston had identified sewers that needed sealing, but high flows from private sewers had also been detected. Owners would be advised that there was a problem and would be asked to take remedial action.
- Thames Water advised that private pumping usually related to water around properties. Sometimes this was pumped to the sewer rather than the surface water sewer.
- It was suggested that the Thames Water CEO should be fined in relation to pollution incidents. Thames Water confirmed that the previous CEO had worked incredibly hard, and the interim CEOs were doing the same. This was not considered an effective way to improve performance.
- It was confirmed that works in Hampstead Norreys would start imminently. Works could not have been started earlier, since the groundwater had receded later than usual. With 62 areas that had to be closely monitored due to concerns, resources had to be prioritised carefully.
- It was noted that the River Pang had previously been rated as 'good' in 2016. Thames Water stated that the only thing that had changed had been the indicator related to fish, which had dropped to 'poor'. Indicators most closely related to discharges were invertebrates and ammonia, which were both rated as 'good'. The 17 pollution incidents that had occurred since 2013 were not considered to have had a significant impact on water quality. However, improvements were needed to stop further discharges.
- When challenged about rising bills for customers, Thames Water indicated that bills were at the same level in real terms as they were 10 years ago.

Councillor Stuart Gourley proposed a no-notice procedural motion to suspend standing orders to allow members of the public to speak at the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Dominic Boeck. At the vote, the motion was passed.

The Chairman invited members of local stakeholder organisations who had previously submitted questions to Thames Water and the Environment Agency to ask one supplementary question each. Questions were received from River Action, Action for the

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River Kennet, East Garston Flood Forum, Thatcham Flood Forum, Pang Valley Flood Forum and the Newbury Clay Hill Flood Warden:

- Before asking their question, River Action challenged points made by Thames Water:
 - In relation to the photo of the River Pang in Pangbourne on 21 September, it was highlighted that although there had not been any discharges from the Hampstead Norreys sewage works, there had been discharges from Bucklebury, Chapel Row and Beenham. Thames Water confirmed this was correct and apologised to the Committee for inadvertently providing an incomplete account of discharges on that date.
 - Thames Water had indicated that there had been no sewage leaks from Hampstead Norreys that could be linked to designation of the River Pang as 'poor', but there had been 42 discharges of untreated sewage from other sites in that year.
- In relation to the question on water security, Thames Water confirmed that this was addressed in the company's Water Resources Management Plan, which had been published and submitted to government. This sought to reduce demand significantly by reducing leakage, fitting more meters, and water efficiency. However, additional water resource was also needed to cope with climate change and population growth and a new reservoir was planned near Abingdon. A water re-use scheme was also proposed for West London. In the longer term, water transfers may be needed from other parts of the UK. Abstractions would be reduced from sensitive rivers and groundwater sources.

(Councillor Geoff Mayes left the meeting.)

- The EA confirmed that storm overflows due primarily to groundwater infiltration were not permitted. The EA had driven the requirement for event duration monitoring at all storm overflow sites to be in place by the end of 2023. The EA had active investigations in assessing information from a large number of sites and its compliance with environmental permits. Appropriate action would be taken in response to any non-compliance in line with the EA's enforcement and sanctions policy.
- Thames Water indicated that tankers would be used in East Garston to manage overflows this winter. Other options had been considered, but there was not sufficient room to be able to use mitigations that had been used successfully elsewhere. Tankers were acknowledged to be the last resort. Meanwhile, investigations were ongoing to find the source of infiltration. Filters had been installed to prevent solids from being discharged to watercourses, and any discharges to watercourses had been very dilute, so there had been no impact on water quality. Mitigation works would continue until water levels became too high to continue.
- In relation to new developments, Thames Water stated that they were statutory consultees on Local Plans, but not on individual planning applications, so they relied upon liaison with Council officers to get information. This allowed Thames Water to work out if there was sufficient sewer capacity to accommodate the planned development. If there was insufficient capacity, then developer charges were used to expand the network. If capacity could not be delivered quickly enough to meet the developer's aspirations, then the Council would be asked to impose a Grampian condition to prevent the development from being occupied until the necessary improvements had been made. Building regulation inspections were needed to ensure that the connections had been made properly. If additional flows would create concern over compliance with site permits at sewage works, then Thames Water

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would ask for a Grampian Condition to be imposed until the necessary works could be completed. These works would be funded from their business planning process. Thames Water sought to avoid seeking Grampian Conditions wherever possible.

- Thames Water acknowledged that there had been issues with receiving data from sewer depth monitors and confirmed that the data logger programme was under review. They committed to finding a solution for loggers in Hampstead Norreys.
- Thames Water confirmed that letters were about to go out to Hampstead Norreys residents informing them of the planned works. This would start with survey work on Section 104a - private sewers adopted in 2011, which had not yet been mapped. Lining works would follow as issues were detected. Completion was anticipated in May 2024, subject to groundwater levels.
- Thames Water indicated that there appeared to be a complex set of issues affecting the Northbrook in Newbury. They offered to set up a series of meetings with the EA and the Council to identify the issues, potential solutions, and sources of funding. The source of a previous milky discharge had been located and stopped, but it was reported that this had since reappeared. Thames Water stressed the importance of pollution incidents being reported as they were spotted. In terms of the oil deposits, a location of interest had been identified and a site visit would be made to ensure that the premises had fat management processes in place.

Action: Thames Water to meet with the EA and West Berkshire Council to discuss the Northbrook in Newbury.

It was agreed that relevant contact details would be circulated with the minutes:

- Environment Agency:
 - Enquiries: enquiries_thm@environment-agency.gov.uk
 - 24 hr incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60
- Thames Water:
 - Online pollution Incident reporting tool:
<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/report-a-problem#/view-and-report-problems>

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.20 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

Actions arising from previous Meetings

Members are requested to consider the following list of actions and note the updates provided.

Ref No:	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Comments/Update
89	07/03/2023	Libraries Review Consult with town / parish councils to understand what they wanted from the service	Felicity Harrison	In Progress - The libraries report did not go to Executive on 21 September as originally planned. Instead, the vision for libraries, based on the recommendations of the Libraries Review, was presented to Strategy Board on 9 November. Next steps are still to be confirmed.
90	07/03/2023	Libraires Review Ensure that 'priorities', 'review recommendations' and 'opportunities for future investment are aligned and that targets are set	Felicity Harrison	
91	07/03/2023	Libraires Review Libraries report to be updated before submitting it to the Executive	Felicity Harrison	
109	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Send Thames Water contact details for Councillor Abbs.	Gordon Oliver	Complete - Following the change of Executive Portfolio Holder, Thames Water has had an initial meeting with Councillor Stuart Gourley.
110	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Set up a meeting with planners to review how best to facilitate water efficient homes.	Cllr Carolyne Culver	Complete - There has been an exchange of emails on this subject with Thames Water and the Council's Planning Policy, Infrastructure and Place Manager.
111	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Arrange a site visit for Councillor Geoff Mayes to the Burghfield and Mortimer sewage works.	Thames Water	In Progress - Thames Water has been asked to forward details of the works and to arrange a site visit in the spring.
112	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Set up a meeting with Councillor Stuart Gourley and council officers to discuss the London Road pumping station	Thames Water	In progress - Councillor Gourley is still trying to agree a date for the meeting.
113	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Confirm details of proposed manhole sealing in Stanford Dingley to Councillor Christopher Read.	Thames Water	Complete - Thames Water has confirmed completion of sewer lining and manhole sealing in Stanford Dingley.
114	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Send a link to the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan to Councillor Christopher Read	Thames Water	In progress - Chased on 6 November.
115	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Send details about payment of internal dividends to Councillor Justin Pemberton	Thames Water	Complete - Forwarded details of Thames Water's 'Our Finances Explained' document with appropriate page reference.
116	11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency Meet with the EA and West Berkshire Council to discuss the Northbrook in Newbury	Thames Water	In progress - Unfortunately, the EA has declined to offer any resource to this for the time being. However, Councillor Gourley is seeking to arrange a meeting with Thames Water.

Last updated: 20 November 2023

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Scrutiny Commission – 28 November 2023

Item 4 – Declarations of interest

Verbal Item

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Agenda Item 5.

Scrutiny Commission – 28 November 2023

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Property Investment Strategy

Committee considering report:	Scrutiny Commission
Date of Committee:	28 November 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4402

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report presents the call-in request submitted on 6 November 2023 for the Scrutiny Commission to review the Executive’s decision (EX4402) of 2 November 2023 concerning the Property Investment Strategy.
- 1.2 The call-in has been submitted in accordance with Parts 5 and 6.9 of the Council’s Constitution.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 In accordance with the call-in request dated 6 November 2023, it is recommended that Members of the Scrutiny Commission review the Executive’s decision (EX4402) of 2 November 2023 concerning the Property Investment Strategy.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny Commission has the power to make the following decisions regarding a called in item:
 - (a) Confirm the Executive decision; or
 - (b) Propose amendments and refer the matter back to Executive for further consideration; or
 - (c) Having taken advice from the Council’s Monitoring Officer and S.151 Officer, the Commission may refer the decision to Council if it is of the opinion that the decision is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by the Council.

3 Supporting Information

Executive Decision

- 3.1 The report setting out the review of the Council’s Property Investment Strategy was presented for consideration by the Executive on 2 November 2023. The report recommended that the Executive resolve as follows:

Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Property Investment Strategy

- (a) The Council disinvests from the commercial property portfolio over the medium financial term (MTFS) in order to generate capital receipts.
- (b) Resulting capital receipts should be applied to future capital financing of the approved capital programme and agreed transformation projects with a view to generating longer term revenue savings.
- (c) Approve the proposed disposal in the Part Two appendix E.

3.2 This was debated by the Executive and opposition at the meeting on 2 November 2023. The Executive resolved to approve the above recommendations.

Call-in of the Decision

3.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution eight Elected Members (Councillors Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Paul Dick, Clive Hooker, Paul Kander, Ross Mackinnon, Biyi Oloko and Howard Woollaston) called in the Executive Decision (EX4402) on the following basis:

- Having a publicly stated and explicit strategy to disinvest from the entire portfolio over a specific time period puts the Council at a severe commercial disadvantage when negotiating disposals with potential buyers.
- Together with financial projections supporting the strategy indicating that the properties could be sold at a substantial capital loss, again publicly available for the market to see, the decision ensures that the Council will not achieve best value when disposing of these assets and could result in the Council receiving millions of pounds less in receipts than would otherwise be the case.
- The financial projections included in the paper (paragraph 7.3) contained a false assertion that capital financing savings from disposal of the portfolio would be £6.9m annually. In fact these would be cumulative savings over the life of the MTFS. Supporting figures provided in the table were unclear and difficult to follow.
- Cllr Abbs stated during debate on the item that when considering the paper as a member of the Executive, he did not understand the financial analysis provided. It is likely that other members of the Executive experienced similar difficulties.
- In Part 2 of the meeting, verbal clarifications were provided to the Executive shortly before voting. This may not have been sufficient to provide members with appropriate understanding of the financial implications of the decision.

3.4 The Members of the Council who submitted the call-in request proposed that, based on the need for further detailed examination of the points above, an alternative course of action as follows:

- The decision is not implemented and the Council's Property Investment Strategy reverts to the status quo ante;

Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Property Investment Strategy

- The Property Investment Board, in line with its current Terms of Reference, may from time to time advise the Executive that particular assets may be disposed of, if capital receipts represent best value for the Council;
 - In the absence of property disposals the Council should continue to benefit from rental income in excess of all costs, and
 - The lack of a hard deadline for disposal of the portfolio will allow the Council to retain a strong hand in commercial negotiations.
- 3.5 The call-in request indicated that the Members considered the report to be contrary to the Council's Budget and Policy Framework for the following reasons:
- (a) The Budget set in March 2023 did not envisage disposals from the commercial property portfolio, so the decision is contrary to and not wholly in accordance with the Budget.
 - (b) The Policy Framework reserves the Property Investment Strategy to Council.
- 3.6 The Council's S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted in accordance with paragraph 15.2 of Part 6.9 of the Constitution, and they have both determined that the decision EX4402 is not contrary to the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. The reasons for this decision are that:
- (a) the Executive has authority under the existing Property Investment Strategy approved by Council in March 2021, to approve the sale of individual assets.
 - (b) The proposed changes to the Property Investment Strategy will be considered as part of the Investment and Borrowing Strategy at Council in February 2024, as detailed on the forward plan.
- 3.7 Full details of the Council's Property Investment Strategy approved by Council in March 2021 can be accessed via the following link:
https://decisionmaking.westberks.gov.uk/documents/s91521/16a.%20Appendix%20E%202021_Property%20Investment%20Strategy.pdf

Role of Scrutiny Commission

- 3.8 The Scrutiny Commission may consider, having taken the advice of the Council's Monitoring Officer and S.151 Officer, whether the matter is contrary to the Council's Budget and / or Policy Framework approved by Council. If it decides that it is contrary to the Council's Budget and / or Policy Framework, then the matter *may* be referred to Council without further debate.
- 3.9 If it decides that it is not contrary to the Council's Budget and / or Policy Framework then, then a report with the Scrutiny Commission's findings will be presented to the next meeting of the Executive (i.e., the meeting following the call-in request) unless there are exceptional circumstances why this cannot be achieved. In these circumstances the Scrutiny Commission Chairman and the Leader of the Council will agree a revised timetable.

Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Property Investment Strategy

3.10 The report will either confirm the original decision or propose amendments to it in any way it thinks fit and shall give reasons for its final decision. If the Scrutiny Commission upholds the Executive decision, that decision shall take immediate effect.

3.11 It should be noted that any matter which has been the subject of a call-in request may not be the subject of a further call-in request.

4 Appendices

Appendix A – Property Investment Strategy Review (Executive, 2 November 2023).

Background Papers:

None

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

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Document Control

Document Ref:	Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Property Investment Strategy	Date Created:	07 November 2023
Version:	3.0	Date Modified:	20 November 2023
Author:	Gordon Oliver		
Owning Service	Strategy and Governance		

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1	7 November 2023	Draft Report	1.0
2	19 November 2023	Updated Report	2.0
3	20 November 2023	Final Report	3.0

Property Investment Strategy Review

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	2 November 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Date Portfolio Member sent/agreed report:	13 October 2023
Report Author:	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4402

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 In the current financial year, the Council reported a quarter one forecast overspend of £6.3 million against a General Fund provision of £7.2 million. In response the Council has: Implemented expenditure limitations, reviewed capital financing provisions and undertaken a review of the commercial property portfolio which is informed by the Property Investment Strategy. This report provides a review of the Property Investment Strategy which was initially implemented by the Council under the previous administration in May 2017, and makes recommendations designed to support the financial resilience of the Council in the current economic environment.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended to Members that:
- (a) The Council disinvests from the commercial property portfolio over the medium financial term (MTFS) in order to generate capital receipts.
 - (b) Resulting capital receipts should be applied to future capital financing of the approved capital programme and agreed transformation projects with a view to generating longer term revenue savings.
 - (c) Approve the proposed disposal in the Part Two appendix E.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Changes to the Prudential Code and PWLB lending facility determined that it is not prudent for local authorities to make investment or spending decision that will increase the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), unless directly and primarily

	related to the functions of the authority. This change in guidance resulted in the Council's approved Property Investment Strategy being partially invested. The portfolio currently generates a net £1 million (approximate), contribution to the Council's revenue budget. A move towards disposal will result in a loss of net income, however this is mitigated by avoidance of future high-cost capital financing supporting the Council's approved capital programme and funding of revenue transformation programmes.			
Human Resource:	Not applicable			
Legal:	Not applicable			
Risk Management:	Risk is around disposal value as the commercial property sector is relatively depressed. If the recommendation is agreed, risks will be mitigated through advice from the Council's procured management specialist Montagu Evans with regard to timing and valuation for asset sales.			
Property:	No impacts on operational Council properties. Report focuses solely on the commercial property portfolio.			
Policy:	This is a change in policy moving from maintaining a property investment portfolio for yield.			
	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 and s151 Officer.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Council has invested in a commercial property portfolio of £62 million (inclusive of purchasing costs). The portfolio currently generates income which supports the delivery of Council core services, total gross income generation since adoption of the strategy is approximately £18 million.
- 4.2 The portfolio above provides a portfolio split of 41% office, 29% retail warehouse, 22% retail and 8% petrol filling station. The portfolio is widely distributed, with two assets (27.9% of the portfolio based on 31 March 2023 valuations), located within district.
- 4.3 The current economic climate presents an opportunity to review the portfolio. The challenging economic environment has resulted in declining property valuations, as at 31 March 2023 the portfolio was valued at £51.4 million, compared to a net asset at purchase value of £58.6 million. Details of fluctuations in the value of the portfolio is detailed in appendix B. In 2022/23, £3.3 million of gross income and £1.188 net of

financing costs was included within the Council's revenue outturn. Current contractual rentals for 2023/24 total £3.5 million of gross income, with forecast net yields of £1.3 million.

- 4.4 Taking into consideration the current economic climate faced by Councils with rising inflationary pressures, surges in looked after / supported populations and increasing capital financing costs, this report seeks to recommend that the Council disinvests from the existing commercial property portfolio and utilises resulting capital receipts to future fund capital financing of investment in the Council's core estate and transformation programmes. This recommendation is based on the fluctuating PWLB rates, a 25-year annuity rate (on which revenue setting is based) is 5.7% (including certainty rate), compared to historic averages of 2-3%. Releasing £1 million of capital receipts therefore avoids a capital financing cost of £75.5k against future annual revenue budgets. The Council has ambitious capital and transformation programmes designed to enhance the district and long-term financial sustainability, generation and application of financial receipts will support delivery of these programmes.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Council's Property Investment Strategy was approved and implemented in May 2017 with an initial investment envelope of £50 million. At Council in July 2018, the envelope for investment was extended to £100 million with the following parameters:
- (a) Limiting the size of any single acquisition to £15 million.
 - (b) Limiting acquisitions in any single sector to 40% of the total portfolio (35% for offices).
 - (c) Limiting exposure to any single tenant income to £750k per annum.
 - (d) Limiting total investment in any single region (investment in all regions of England, Scotland and Wales allowable), to no more than 35% and further limited to no more than 25% in any single town/city.
 - (e) Acquiring properties with tenants having a Dunn & Bradstreet covenant of 5A1.
- 5.2 The Property Investment Board (PIB), with the support of procured external advisors were granted delegated authority to undertake acquisitions and ongoing review and management of the portfolio. The PIB terms of reference are detailed in appendix A.

Background

- 5.3 In August 2021 HM Treasury significantly revised guidance for the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), lending facility. Councils intending to purchase investment assets primarily for yield would no longer be able to access the PWLB except to refinance existing loans or externalise internal borrowing. Alongside this, CIPFA published its revised Prudential Code for Capital Finance and Treasury Management Code on 20th December 2021. The key changes in the two codes focused on permitted reasons to borrow, knowledge and skills, and the management of non-treasury investments. To

comply with the revised 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), unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the authority. Existing commercial investments are not required to be sold; however, Councils with existing commercial investments who expect to need to borrow should review the options for exiting these investments.

- 5.4 At the time of the legislative changes, the Council had invested £62 million (inclusive of purchase related fees), across the following assets:

Asset Name and Address	Property Type	Purchase Price Including Fees	Net Asset Cost
		£000s	£000s
Dudley Port Petrol Filling Station, Tipton	Petrol Filling Station	3,724	3,510
79 Bath Road, Chippenham	Retail Warehouse	9,651	9,106
Lloyds Bank, 104 Terminus Road, Eastbourne	Retail	3,078	2,900
Aldi/Iceland, Cleveland Gate Retail Park, Gainsborough	Retail Warehouse	6,424	6,048
303 High Street and 2 Waterside South, Lincoln	Retail	6,010	5,665
3&4 The Sector, Newbury Business Park	Office	18,802	17,760
Sainsbury's, High Street, North Allerton	Retail	7,463	7,050
Ruddington Fields Business Park, Mere Way, Nottingham	Office	6,931	6,545
Total Portfolio Expenditure Outlay at Purchase		62,083	58,584

- 5.5 The portfolio above provides a portfolio split of 41% office, 29% retail warehouse, 22% retail and 8% petrol filling station. The Quarter One 2023/24 market update provided by the Council's appointed management consultants (extract included in appendix C), indicates a challenging period for the commercial property sector with rising costs resulting in income and margins being impacted. Businesses are expected to continue to contain costs until the inflationary pressures ease, reducing rental growth potential across the sectors. The high street retail and office sectors have been particularly impacted through the Covid era and resulting hybrid working. This is paired with investors' rising cost of capital, UK gilts (five and ten years), are currently at approximately 4.5% compared to 1.3% in early 2022.
- 5.6 The Council's current portfolio split is sensitive to valuation risk, as at 31st March 2023 the total value of the portfolio was valued at £51.5 million. Annual valuation data on an individual asset basis is detailed in appendix B. A £4.4 million reduction in value has occurred from purchase to valuation as at 31st March 2023 across the retail element of the portfolio (original purchase price net of fees). A further £3.3 million reduction in value has been incurred in respect of the office portfolio.

Property Type	Valuation as at 31/03/2023	Net Asset Cost	Variation in Portfolio Value
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Petrol Filling Station	£4,155	£3,510	£645
Retail Warehouse	£15,000	£15,154	-£154
Retail	£11,260	£15,615	-£4,355
Office	£21,050	£24,305	-£3,255
Portfolio Value	£51,465	£58,584	-£7,119

- 5.7 Post changes to the Prudential Code and PWLB lending facility rules, no further investment activity in respect of further acquisitions has been undertaken. However, £199k of capital expenditure across the portfolio (planned maintenance and enhancements), has been financed through the capital programme. The current, approved capital programme for the period 2023/24 – 2032/33 makes provision for a further £2.3 million of Council funded expenditure on planned maintenance and enhancements across the portfolio.
- 5.8 Capital financing of the original portfolio purchase was undertaken through maturity loans with a weighted average interest rate of 2.46%. At the time of producing this review the principal balance of £62 million remains outstanding. Annual interest of £1.5 million and £700k (approximately) of Minimum Revenue Provision payments (MRP), annually, is forecast for the next term of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 5.9 Capital financing costs associated with the portfolio are offset via rental income. The annual revenue budget is set with an assumed gross income generation of £3.5 million, and net contribution of approximately £1 million to support delivery of core Council services. The estimated rate of return on the portfolio for 2022/23 is summarised below. The rate of return is based on the valuation of the portfolio as of 31st March 2023. The estimated net income for 2022/23 is based on the revenue outturn as of 31st March 2023. The 2022/23 rates of return disclosed as part of the Council’s treasury outturn were negative based on the income yields in year being less than the annual decrease in value of the portfolio.

Property Investment Portfolio	£000s
Valuation as at March 2022	£58,985
Valuation as at March 2023	£51,465
Loss on change in market value during 2022/23	-£7,520
2022/23 Net Income	-£3,383
2022/23 rate of return excluding financing	-7.0%
MRP Costs 2022/23	£666
Interest costs 2022/23	£1,529
Outturn net of MRP and interest	-£1,188
2022/23 rate of return including financing	-10.7%

- 5.10 Due to the nature of direct investment in property there is additional risk (upside and downside) that the value of the investment may change. In respect of commercial property, this risk is carried alongside the risk of voids and no rental income being recovered adversely impacting on achievable rates of return. These risks have historically been managed through allocation of General Fund Reserve to Earmarked Reserves as part of annual budget setting processes. However, for financial year 2023/24 no such provision has been made due to pressure on the Council’s overall reserve position.

Proposals

- 5.11 **Recommended option:** The proposal is for the Council to disinvest from the property portfolio. Disinvestment should take the form of a phased approach over the term of the MTFS.

- 5.12 **Impacts of disinvestment – Balance Sheet:** Disinvestment will result in crystallisation of a loss on disposal if disposal occurs at the current portfolio valuation level. The impact on the Council's Balance Sheet would be a reduction in the net asset base. The crystallised loss will not impact on the Council's General Fund as it will be reversed out below the line to unusable reserves (in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice). The resulting capital receipt(s) will be held in usable capital reserves for deployment as transformation funding (under current flexible use of capital receipts guidance), or to finance future years capital expenditure.
- 5.13 **Impacts of disinvestment – revenue:** Since 2020 PWLB rates have significantly increased and currently are particularly volatile. Current PWLB rates for a 25-year annuity (the basis of budget setting for capital expenditure) are 5.7% (including certainty rate). £1 million of capital financing requirement effectively equates to an annual interest charge £57k and a cashflow impact of £75.5k. Over the period of the MTFS (2024-25 to 2026/27), Council funded capital expenditure of approximately £60 million is anticipated based on historic expenditure trends, this level is below the level of the approved capital programme. Capital receipts effectively avoid the requirement to undertake higher cost debt financing, reducing capital financing budgetary increases over the midterm. The loss of net income (approximately £1 million annually by year three of the disinvestment period), will effectively be offset by avoiding any new annual capital financing costs associated with debt financing.
- 5.14 **Considerations to strategy adoption:** MRP and capital financing costs associated with the borrowing to support the original purchases of the portfolio would remain payable. The revenue impacts of the ongoing financing equate to annual interest of £1.5 million and annual MRP on average of £700k. Income bearing assets would be sold crystallising losses held on the Balance Sheet. There is a risk that the more desirable assets with higher income yields would be more likely to be disposed of initially creating a lag between disposal and loss of income against cumulative capital finance savings. Revenue savings are dependent on PWLB rates remaining high over the mid to longer term. Effectiveness of the strategy will be dependent on the level of capital receipts generated, and reduced by any reallocation of receipts to transformation, where any transformation project does not deliver tangible revenue savings.

6 Other options considered.

- 6.1 To do nothing. For the reasons detailed within the report this is not recommended.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council's property investment portfolio since adoption and implementation in 2017 has generated gross revenue streams of approximately £18 million, with an approximate annual £1.2 million net contribution to provision to core Council services. The economic turbulence of recent financial years in response to the Covid pandemic, fiscal event of September 2022 and cost of living crisis, has impacted on the Balance Sheet valuations of the portfolio. Over the duration of strategy, the portfolio (which has been fully invested since 2018), has reduced in value by £7.1 million.
- 7.2 Historically Councils were able to access PWLB rates of 2 – 3%, since January 2022 the rate of borrowing (focusing on a 25-year annuity rate), has significantly increased, with current rates (at the time of writing this report) of 5.7%. Capital receipts now have

Property Investment Strategy Review

tremendous power for a Local Authority enabling transformation funding and offsetting future high-cost capital financing. £1 million of future Council funded capital expenditure equates to a revenue financing requirement and cash flow impact of £75.5k annually.

- 7.3 If the current portfolio was to achieve the values as per the 31 March 2023 valuations (£51.4 million), potential future capital financing savings over the term of the MTFS would equate to £6.9 million annually, inclusive of MRP. This is compared to an approximate £1.3 million annual net contribution of income from the portfolio to the Council's revenue budget, see table below.

Costs / Savings:	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total over MTFS
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Anticipated Annual New Council funded capital expenditure	£16,523	£19,828	£23,793	£60,144
Application of capital receipts (note 1)	-£16,523	-£19,828	-£15,114	-£51,465
Revised capital expenditure requiring financing	£0	£0	£8,679	£8,679
Avoidance of new annual capital financing costs (interest and principle repayments) (Note 3)	-£783	-£1,560	-£2,125	
Avoidance of new annual MRP costs (Note 3)	-£351	-£832	-£1,232	
Avoidance of cumulative new annual interest and principle loan costs	-£783	-£2,344	-£4,468	-£4,468
Avoidance of cumulative new MRP costs	-£351	-£1,183	-£2,415	-£2,415
Total financing savings over MTFS	-£1,134	-£3,526	-£6,883	-£6,883
Comparison to income yields if retain portfolio:	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total over MTFS
Loss of 23/24 budgeted annual gross income yields	-£3,497	-£3,497	-£3,497	-£10,491
Annual portfolio financing costs (note 2)	£2,200	£2,200	£2,200	£6,600
Net annual income yields supporting the revenue budget	-£1,297	-£1,297	-£1,297	-£3,891

Notes:

1. Assumed disposals at 31 March 2023 valuations and no allowance for costs (£51.4 million)
2. Maturity loan financing would remain as no change made to the Council's CFR.
3. Cost avoidance calculations generated through the Council's adopted liability benchmark.

- 7.4 When considering adopting the strategy of complete portfolio disinvestment, key factors are: MRP and capital financing costs associated with the maturity borrowing to support the original portfolio investment would remain payable. The revenue impacts of the ongoing financing equate to annual interest of £1.5 million and annual MRP on average of £700k. Income bearing assets would be sold crystallising losses held on the Balance Sheet of approximately £7 million based on 31st March 2023 valuations. There is a risk that the more desirable assets with higher income yields would be more likely to be disposed of initially creating a lag between disposal and loss of income against cumulative capital finance savings. The offsetting revenue savings are dependent on PWLB rates remaining high over the mid to longer term. Effectiveness of the strategy will be dependent on the level of capital receipts generated, and reduced by any reallocation of receipts to transformation, where any transformation project does not deliver tangible revenue savings.
- 7.5 The modelled financials assume full disposal of the portfolio over the term of the MTFS, disposals have not been profiled as to order of disposal which may impact on the above figures. However, the financials above provide a guide as to the current financial potential through unlocking the portfolio, allowing the Council to refocus future capital funds whilst protecting the revenue budget position in the mid-term.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Property Investment Board Terms of Reference

Property Investment Strategy Review

- 8.2 Appendix B – Property Investment Portfolio – Assets Valuations
- 8.3 Appendix C – Montagu Evans – Quarter One Financial Year 2023/24 Market Analysis
- 8.4 Appendix D – Property Portfolio 2023/24 Annual Rentals as Reported at Quarter One
- 8.5 Appendix E – Confidential Part Two Report

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 Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Officer details:

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Property Investment Board Terms of Reference

Release Date:	March 2021
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1	Background
<p>1. At a full meeting of West Berkshire District Council on 9th May 2017 (C3283) the Council approved the Property Investment Strategy. The Strategy is regularly reviewed and was updated at the March 2020 meeting. The Property Investment Strategy is an appendix to the Capital Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23;</p> <p>2. Delegates to the Service Director : Strategy and Governance in consultation with and having received agreement from the Property Investment Board to dispose of property in accordance with the above Strategy up to a maximum of £15m per transaction where it would not be expedient for the Executive to make this decision;</p> <p>3. Delegates to the Service Director: Strategy and Governance to inform the next available Executive of any disposal decision;</p> <p>4. Delegates to the Head of Finance and Property in consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Property, authority to appoint suitable consultants in accordance with the Contract Rules of Procedure (Part 11 of the Constitution);</p> <p>5. West Berkshire Council will pause investment at the investment levels as at 31.3.2020 following the outcome of the PWLB consultation on its use</p>	
2	Purpose
<p>The members of the Property Investment Board (PIB) or their substitutes will collectively be responsible for the recommendations made by them having received reports related to the acquisition (or disposal) of commercial property.</p> <p>The PIB will play a critical role in the governance of the property investment strategy including ongoing monitoring of performance in order to make informed decisions.</p>	

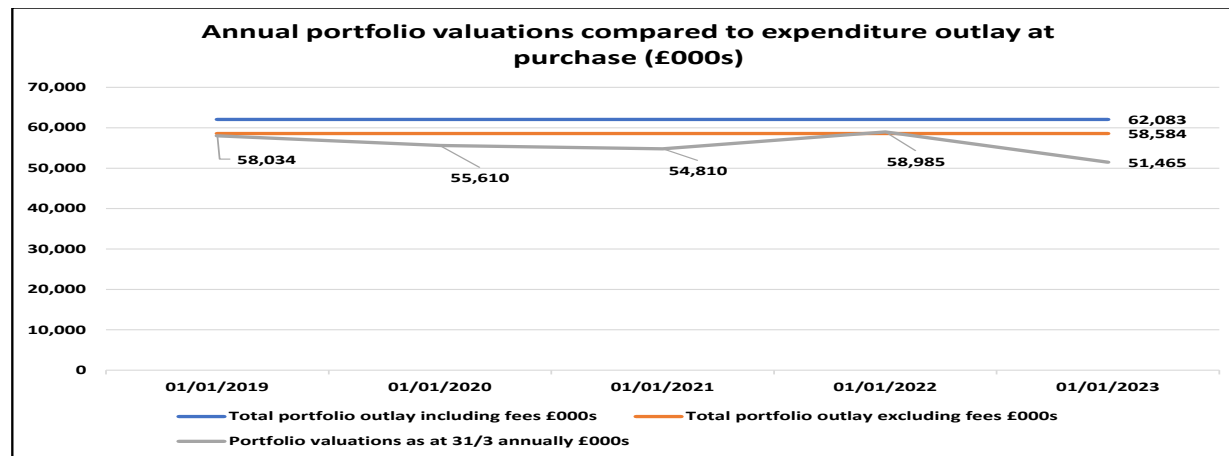
3	Terms of reference
<p>The PIB terms of reference are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In circumstances where a report proposes the acquisition of a property known to be outside the scope of the Delegated Authority criteria, to make recommendation(s) to approve or reject the proposal to progress with the acquisition to the Executive; 2. To make recommendation(s) to approve or reject the proposal to progress with the disposal of an individual property to the Executive. Where it would not be expedient for the Executive to consider a proposal to dispose of an asset authority be delegated to the Service Director Strategy and Governance in consultation with the portfolio holder(s) with responsibilities for finance and property, having received a report from Property Services to do so; 3. To receive quarterly performance reports (including an Annual Review report) conveying information on acquisitions, costs, total capital commitment and performance of the investment. 	
4	Membership
<p>The PIB is to be a joint Officer and Member board formed from the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Executive Director (Resources) (Chair) 2. Service Director: Strategy and Governance (or substitute) 3. Executive Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance (or alternative Executive member) 4. Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance (or alternative Executive member). 5. Head of Finance & Property services <p>Reporting Officers to the PIB will be the Property Services Manager (or substitute) and the external consultant property agent.</p>	

5	Roles and responsibilities
<p>The members of the PIB will collectively be responsible for the recommendations made by the PIB, having given regard to the knowledge and expertise brought by individual members (such as legal, financial or political).</p> <p>Strategy and Governance will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce agendas and minutes to record the meetings <p>The Property Services Manager will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange meeting dates, venue; • Produce formal reports (for individual acquisition/disposal or reviews); • Produce formal reports for quarterly reporting/monitoring and annual reviews; • Record and maintain property data for acquired property; • Attending PIB meetings; • Liaise with WBC colleagues within relevant teams sufficient to conclude proposals and the satisfactory outcome of recommendations made by the PIB. • With the input of WBC appointed Property Investment Adviser, monitoring performance of the investment, including identifying any issues with the property portfolio. 	
6	Meetings
<p>Scheduled quarterly PIB meetings will be arranged to monitor the implementation of the strategy and performance of investments. Additional ad hoc meetings will be arranged when required as a property acquisition or disposal is proposed.</p>	

Property Investment Portfolio – Assets Valuations

Valuation data as supplied by the Council’s appointed external valuers Avison Young. The current portfolio was fully invested from the financial year ending 31/03/2019.

Asset Name and Address	Property Type	Purchase Price Including Fees	Net Asset Cost	Valuations as at 31/3/2018	Valuations as at 31/3/2019	Valuations as at 31/3/2020	Valuations as at 31/3/2021	Valuations as at 31/3/2022	Valuations as at 31/3/2023
		£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Dudley Port Petrol Filling Station, Tipton	Petrol Filling Station	3,724	3,510	0	3,720	3,595	3,700	3,765	4,155
79 Bath Road, Chippenham	Retail Warehouse	9,651	9,106	0	9,648	9,200	9,500	11,775	9,250
Lloyds Bank, 104 Terminus Road, Eastbourne	Retail	3,078	2,900	1,845	2,590	2,300	1,800	1,800	1,675
Aldi/Iceland, Cleveland Gate Retail Park, Gainsborough	Retail Warehouse	6,424	6,048	3,655	5,150	5,725	5,725	6,300	5,750
303 High Street and 2 Waterside South, Lincoln	Retail	6,010	5,665	3,419	3,734	3,400	2,850	2,950	2,750
3&4 The Sector, Newbury Business Park	Office	18,802	17,760	0	18,801	17,760	17,435	18,010	14,350
Sainsbury’s, High Street, North Allerton	Retail	7,463	7,050	0	7,460	7,050	7,050	7,185	6,835
Ruddington Fields Business Park, Mere Way, Nottingham	Office	6,931	6,545	0	6,931	6,580	6,750	7,200	6,700
Total Portfolio Expenditure Outlay at Purchase		62,083	58,584	8,919	58,034	55,610	54,810	58,985	51,465



Montagu Evans – Quarter One Financial Year 2023/24 Market Analysis

MARKET UPDATE

UK ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE & IMPACT ON REAL ESTATE

UK GDP is estimated to have grown by 0.2% in April 2023, after a fall of 0.3% in March 2023. Looking at the broader picture, GDP grew by 0.1% in the three months to April 2023, and annual GDP output is estimated to have grown by 4.1% in 2022, following growth of 7.4% in 2021.

The UK narrowly avoided falling into a recession in 2022, which is defined as two three-month periods of GDP shrinking in a row. Although the economy is in a better position than forecasters expected, families and businesses continue to feel the pressure of rising bills.

(UK GDP. Source: ONS)

CPI rose by 8.7% in the 12 months to May 2023, unchanged from April 2023. Despite inflation remaining flat, economists had widely predicted a fall in the inflation rate to 8.5% in the year to May. It is also still four times higher than the Bank of England's 2% target. The IMF predicts that inflation will not return to the target level until mid-2025, which is later than it had forecast previously.

The Bank increased interest rates in June 2023 for the 13th time since December 2021, with rates rising by 50 bps to 5.0% following May's disappointing inflation figures. It is forecast that rates could climb to as high as 6.0% by the end of the year.

The commercial property market witnessed mixed conditions throughout 2022, as the investment and leasing markets adjusted to the changing macro-economic backdrop. Early signs suggest that investors and occupiers still remain active, albeit the reality of the increasing cost of living and rising expenses for businesses mean that disposable incomes and margins will be negatively impacted. As a result, market activity is likely to be adversely affected as businesses look to contain costs, at least until inflationary pressures ease. This will almost certainly impact rental growth in the short term.

SECTOR SPECIFIC OVERVIEW

HIGH-STREET RETAIL

The High Street sector's difficult set of challenges during the course of, and off the back of the pandemic were well-documented as many retailers on the high street were not able to trade during the mandatory national lockdowns, revenues dramatically decreased.

Retailer's online platforms boomed throughout this period as a result of changing consumer patterns which have now settled into an established alternative to in-store retail with a broader consumer base.

Following on from the Covid era, the road to recovery has not been easy with retailers facing a combination of new challenges including the cost-of-living crisis, high wage inflation, industrial action and rapidly increasing energy bills with weaning government support. The combination of these challenges in addition to decreased consumer confidence has led to considerable volatility in the relationship between in-store and online retail.

In April 2023, UK retail footfall was 4.7% higher than the same month in 2022, according to Springboard data. Compared to April 2019, footfall was down by 12.0%. High streets saw a 4.6% increase in April footfall on an annual comparison, while shopping centres were up by 6.6% and retail parks by 2.9%. Springboard said footfall on weekdays has suffered due to hybrid working.

KEY STATISTICS

- Footfall figures witnessed an increase of 16.1% year-on-year.
- MSCI retail rental growth index grew by 0.04% in March 2023.
- Retail investment volumes totalled £6.8 billion in the year to March 2023.
- Retail capital values have rebounded in March 2023 with the MSCI index showing a rise of 0.72% month-on-month in March 2023, compared to a fall of 0.45% in February 2023. The return to growth was entirely driven by retail warehouses.

SUPERMARKETS

The food sector has retained a strong, resilient position in the past few years with sales forecasts predicted to grow 3.8% in 2023, reaching £180.6 billion (Source: Retail Economics). Retailers are reporting further shifts in shopper behaviour as consumers shy away from online (a marked change from pandemic-induced lockdown habits), preferring physical stores, including the discounters in order to find best value.

In the occupational market, the return of superstore requirements has emerged as national multiples continue to be acquisition-hungry. Stores offering omnichannel characteristics, including the ability to fulfil online orders, are increasingly important within major retailers' strategies moving forward. The increased occupier demand has translated into rental growth on food stores. This is more evident in London where pressures on land means diminished supply. Increased build costs and weakened yields further pushes rental growth as retailers increase their rental bids so that developers can achieve viability.

In the investment market, where there is long income secured to strong covenants, there is an increasing depth of investor demand, notwithstanding general market uncertainty. However, investors do remain focused on the quality of location, trading fundamentals,

sustainable rents, omnichannel capability, alternative use potential covenant strength and increasingly the recent takeovers of Asda and Morrisons. The market correction, commencing in May 2022 and intensified in September 2022 as a result of the 'Mini Budget' has had a huge impact on supermarket investment yields. Prime supermarket yields (20+ years, rack rented, RPI indexation, dominant omnichannel stores) are now in the 5.25% NIY territory, compared with 3.75% 12 months ago. A 150bp yield shift at these levels represent a huge loss of value in the order of 25% - 30%.

A buy-side reason for this shift in value is investor's rising cost of capital. Although rates have settled to an extent since the Mini Budget, 10-year gilts and 5-year SWAPS are now trading at c. 3.3% and 3.5% respectively, a huge increase since the beginning of February 2022 where both were trading at around 1.3%. These huge swings in value have led to a step-change in the levels investors are willing to pay for prime supermarket assets, and clearly an appropriate discount for non-prime assets thereafter.

KEY STATISTICS

- From January-April, investment volumes hit £804.1 million.
- Aldi and Lidl have seen greater than double the year-on-year growth of any other UK grocer in May 2023.
- Large supermarkets have seen an average reduction of -15% in business rates.
- Overall profit of major supermarket brands has been affected as operators commit to shielding customers from inflation by keeping prices low.

INDUSTRIAL

The UK Industrial & Logistics Property market has weathered the challenges presented by Covid-19 well over the past 24 months, with positive sentiment and activity continuing to be driven by:

- Acceleration of Online/ E-comm operations
- Desire for overseas operators/ businesses to secure a physical presence in the UK
- Manufacturers' need to hold more inventory within the UK to mitigate any potential future delays at the UK border.

Following a strong economic rebound in 2021, 2022 proved to be a challenging year for both the occupational and investment markets with slowing economic growth, sharp increases in inflation and Bank of England Rates.

During the current market correction, the industrial sector has seen values fall the most out of the three main commercial property sectors since the June 2022 market peak. A predominant factor is the slowdown in the acquisition of Big Box units that was prevalent in 2022 and has continued into 2023 as a result of hindered activity. However, this is not a

cause for major concern as the multi-let and mix box market caters for a wide range of occupiers and in many major urban markets, the stock of land available to meet demand has been in decline for a long time. At the end of March 2023, there was a 7% increase in supply compared to six months ago but 2% down on 12 months ago. This suggests the pressure on occupiers looking for good quality warehouse space will remain, which will subsequently see rents remain robust for prime stock.

Therefore, even as the economy potentially slides into a recession, supply and demand dynamics are still widely expected to underpin growth in the medium-term.

KEY STATISTICS

- Take-up across the UK for Grade A space over 100,000 sq ft reached circa 8 million sq ft in Q1 2023 – a 49% increase compared to the same period last year and 13% ahead of the 5-year quarterly average.
- The MSCI industrial rental growth index grew by 0.73% month-on-month in March 2023 compared to 0.55% in February 2023. This was the strongest rental growth from the main sectors but marks a slowdown on last summer.
- Investment volumes in the industrial sector reached £11 billion in the year to March 2023, down from £13.1 billion in the year to February 2023.

OFFICE

Occupiers are continuing to assess their occupational need as the widespread pandemic-driven hybrid working model transitions into the post-covid working environment. For some, this has seen a return to the office full time whereas as others have chosen to retain remote and flexible working options.

Buyers continue to favour high quality stock, with secondary assets posing significant challenges for buyers, both in terms of tenant attraction/retention, as well as capex risk owing to increasingly stringent environmental legislations imposed by the government. Grade A space accounted for 68% of take-up recorded in 2022, which was the highest proportion since 2018. As such, yield disparity between prime and secondary offices has continued to widen. Additionally, ESG credentials continue to be very high on investor and corporates agendas, whereby assets need to already deliver on these criteria, or it be part of buyers' business plans to deliver best-in-class assets. This is driving a significant polarity in pricing between prime, institutional grade assets, and secondary stock.

Over the next 6-12 months, the following trends are expected to be seen:

- Yields to begin to stabilise as inflation slows and interest rates moderate.
- Experienced cash buyers buying from forced sales at significantly discounted prices.
- UK assets more appealing to overseas buyers due to weaker Sterling.

- Continued demand for assets that deliver on the ESG agenda from both occupiers and investors – this will drive rental growth and pricing resilience in best-in-class buildings.
- Continued need for an Alternative Use Value (AUV) underpin and repurposing where required.

KEY STATISTICS

- The MSCI Market Rental Growth Index for offices increased by 0.17%, compared to a rise of 0.19% in February 2023.
- Investment volumes in the year to March 2023 totalled approximately £11.1 billion across the UK office market. This is down on the £13.4 billion invested in the year to February 2023.
- The MSCI Capital Growth Index for offices decreased by 0.86% month-on-month in March 2023, compared to the February 2023 figure of -1.11%. This marks the ninth consecutive negative monthly figure, although the rate of decline peaked in October and has slowed since.

RESIDENTIAL

Following tentative signs of improvement in April, annual house price growth softened again in May, falling by 3.4% (from -2.7% in April). However, this largely reflects base effects with prices broadly flat over the month after taking account of seasonal effects. Average prices remain 4% below their August 2022 peak.

The housing market looks set to slow in the coming quarters as pressures on household budgets intensify and labour market conditions start to soften, while mortgage rates remain well above the lows prevailing at this point last year. Over the last few weeks, the average two-year fixed residential mortgage was 6.26% and the average five-year fixed residential mortgage rate was 5.87% as of the 27th June 2023. Increased rates have added to stretched housing affordability at a time when household finances are already under pressure from high inflation.

The housing market looks set to slow in the coming quarters as pressures on household budgets intensify and labour market conditions start to soften, while mortgage rates remain well above the lows prevailing at this point last year.

While activity is likely to remain subdued in the near term, Nationwide are not expecting a dramatic downturn in the housing market, given that labour market conditions remain solid and household.

Property Portfolio 2023/24 Annual Rentals as Reported at Quarter One

Extract from Montagu Evans quarterly performance report.

TOP 10 TENANTS BY RENT

The table below highlights the top 10 tenants within the portfolio which is assessed off their rental income as a percentage of the total portfolio income. The table highlights the level of rental exposure to each of the top 10 tenants and their most recent Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) rating, which comprises a risk indicator for financial covenant strength.

D&B is one of a series of business credit rating agencies and provides in depth information on business financial covenants. The standardised rating system used by D&B assesses a firm's fiscal size and overall creditworthiness, and is split into two parts:

Tenant	Asset	D&B Rating	Rent (pa)	Years to expiry	Years to break option
Wincanton Holdings	79 Bath Road, Chippenham	5A2	£554,250	4.30 years	4.30 years
Computerland UK Ltd	Ruddington Fields Business Park, Mere Way, Nottingham	4A3	£444,174	6.22 years	6.22 years
Sainsburys Supermarkets Ltd	Sainsbury's, High Street, North Allerton	5A1	£437,500	8.47 years	8.47 years
Cirrus Logic (1st)	3&4 The Sector, Newbury Business Park	5A2	£336,708	7.93 years	2.93 years
Mitsubishi HC Capital	3&4 The Sector, Newbury Business Park	5A1	£288,930	6.22 years	6.22 years
Signet t/a Ernest Jones	303 High Street and 2 Waterside South, Lincoln	5A1	£270,000	3.76 years	0.76 years
Aldi	Aldi/Iceland, Cleveland Gate Retail Park, Gainsborough	5A2	£238,956	4.49 years	2.49 years
Rontec	Dudley Port Petrol Filling Station, Tipton	5A1	£220,816	5.75 years	0.00 years
Lloyds Bank Plc	Lloyds Bank, 104 Terminus Road, Eastbourne	5A1	£175,000	3.72 years	0.72 years
Cirrus Logic (GF)	3&4 The Sector, Newbury Business Park	5A2	£160,080	8.00 years	3.00 years

Financial Strength – Based on Tangible Net Worth from a company's latest financial accounts. Financial Strength is denoted by a number and a letter i.e. 5A, 4A, 3A etc. and relates to a range of Tangible Net Worth. 5A reflects a Tangible Net Worth of >£35,000,000, 4A reflects a range between £15,000,000 and £34,999,999, and so on as the scale continues.

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Fostering in West Berkshire

Committee considering report:	Scrutiny Commission
Date of Committee:	28 November 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	19 October 2023
Report Author:	Dave Wraight

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an oversight of the recruitment, remuneration and initiatives that are both taking place and planned with foster carers in West Berkshire.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are recommended to consider the range of proposals outlined below, progressing with one or more with the intention that there will be an increase in the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The financial impacts will depend on the options taken forward and the level of interest from foster carers. CFS is clear that foster care is the most cost-effective way to meet the needs of children in care, especially as the cost for care placements is high and escalating. Some specific costs are detailed within the report. West Berks have been successful in bidding for grant money in partnership with LA partners across the South East for Government funding to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers.
Human Resource:	The Supporting Foster Care Policy for Employees has been developed in collaboration with HR. This is a new HR policy that offers employees who foster additional paid leave of 5 days once recognised as a foster carer. The cost of implementing such an offer is minimal for employees as there are likely to be very few who are able to consider undertaking

	this role but will add value to being an employer of choice and also to improve the pool of potential applicants as foster carers.			
Legal:				
Risk Management:	The risks are primarily with not having enough foster carers to be able to provide care for children who need it, this carries a risk for the child, poor OfSTED inspection outcomes and financial risk with having to provide costly alternatives to foster care.			
Property:	Not applicable			
Policy:	There is legislation and national guidance covering the Local Authority duties in relation to foster carers, locally we have a Sufficiency Statement and a suite of policies that relate to foster care.			
	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			<p>Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes</p> <p>By providing local foster care placements we support better outcomes for children</p>
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:				

4 Executive Summary

4.1 When children are taken into the care of the Local Authority, the first preference when considering care arrangements is foster care, either through a connected person arrangement with extended family/friends who are assessed as foster carers, or through our ‘in house’ foster carers. There has been a sustained increase in the number of children coming into care locally and nationally whilst also a shortage of foster carers. West Berkshire therefore needs to increase the recruitment and training of foster carers, review the remuneration of carers and look at any other initiatives that may increase the provision of foster care in West Berkshire.

4.2 Proposals being considered:

- Creating a dedicated staff resource in CFS to provide a focus on foster care recruitment
- Introducing an Employee Supporting Foster Care Policy in West Berkshire Council
- Reviewing the remuneration, allowances and council tax for foster carers
- Expanding the Independent Fostering Agency market locally
- Taking part in a Regional Fostering Recruitment partnership

- 4.3 The outcomes for children in foster care tend to be better than for children living in residential care, the ability for children to grow up in a foster family tends to be far more positive, consistent and less stigmatising. The costs associated with foster care are significantly less than the costs associated with residential children's home. At the moment, the average cost of care in a children's home is £6,300 per week and we have 13 children in such placements, the weekly cost is £81,900, whereas Foster Care is £405 per week per child or £5,265 for the same group. Not all children in residential care could be placed in Foster Care, however, if four children were placed in foster care rather than residential, there would be an annual cost avoidance of over £1,200,000. There is significant merit for children and for the Local Authority to invest in the strengthening of the offer to recruit and retain foster carers for West Berkshire.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 Children and Family Services strongly believe that children and young people have the right to be brought up by their parents and within their families unless there is clear evidence that doing so is harmful to their overall wellbeing and development. Where possible, services should be provided to enable children to remain at home and when they have come into care in an emergency help them return home or to their extended family, however for some children it is not safe for them to remain at home and they have to be brought into the care of the Local Authority.
- 5.2 The Children's Act 1989 requires local authorities to ensure they secure and provide a range of sufficient accommodation that meets the varying needs of children in care. Section 22G of the Act requires local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after and for whom it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within their local authority area. In those circumstances, section 22G requires local authorities, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those children that meets their needs and is within their local authority area.
- 5.3 Studies undertaken by the Association of Directors of Children's Services over a 12 year period evidence increasing demands on children's social care nationally. Since 2021, demand has grown significantly in West Berkshire. The disruption to support services and household routines from Covid, economic pressures, a reduced service offer across some agencies and high-profile child abuse cases have all contributed to more 'front door' demand.
- 5.4 The numbers of children in need and subject to child protection plans have also risen from 143 in December 2021, to 342 in March 2023. There is a proven correlation between the rise in numbers of children on protection plans and a future rise in children in care. We should expect the number of children in care to rise during 2023.
- 5.5 Maintaining high quality care is challenging in the current environment, with a combination of rising demand, increased costs and a backdrop of a national shortage of places for children, therefore we are proposing a variety of initiatives that will increase the numbers of prospective foster carers in West Berkshire and retain those who are already foster carers.

Introduction

5.6 Recognising that there is a growing number of children coming into the care of the Local Authority, we are proposing a number of initiatives that seeks to increase the number of foster carers in West Berkshire.

Background

5.7 The recruiting of in-house foster carers remains a high priority, but this is in a climate of a highly competitive market, with Local Authorities and IFAs attempting to recruit and train new carers. There are documented studies in the fostering press of a shortage of foster carers nationally. In August 2022, Community Care reported that half of the nation's foster carers were considering quitting due to the cost of living crisis. This is compounded by there being less households with a spare bedroom as more bedrooms are used as home offices following Covid. There has been ongoing in advertising and promotion of fostering locally through a variety of forms of media

5.8 Our Strategy includes:

- To recruit a wide range of foster carers that can meet the needs of our children in care population using a variety of marketing initiatives.
- To provide a high-quality support service, supervision, and training to our current foster carers to ensure they feel valued and part of our fostering community.
- Events and activities to ensure foster carers feel valued and part of a successful team.
- Buddy and mentor scheme to support new and existing carers.
- Actively support the activities of West Berkshire Foster Care Association and regularly meet with them.

5.9 The Family Placement Team is responsible for foster carers and is made up of social workers, family support workers and business support who undertake a number of statutory functions which include:

- The recruitment, training and support of foster carers.
- Assessing, matching and supporting new placements for all children coming into care or existing children who require a new home.
- Completing a range of assessments including Form F's, Viability Assessments, Regulation 24, and Special Guardianship Order Assessments

5.10 Over the years, there have been changes to the team, one of those was the deletion of a post which had the sole focus on the recruitment of foster carers, the functions of this post has been spread out among the rest of the team to be completed alongside the other tasks associated with their roles.

5.11 West Berkshire Foster Carers received an increase in their allowances from April 1st 2023 of 3.5%, however the allowances that we are currently providing to our foster carers have not taken in account the recent "cost of living" rises that have been

experienced within society. There is a need to have a financial offer to foster carers that ensures we are competitive with neighbouring authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies in order for us to recruit and retain foster carers.

5.12 The table below outlines the different payment rates offered amongst our near neighbouring authorities. It is notable that Independent Fostering Agencies pay carers in excess to that paid by Local Authorities.

Fostering Agency	West Berkshire Council	Wokingham Borough Council	Hampshire County Council	(Reading Borough Council)	Swindon Borough Council	Bracknell Forest Council	Oxfordshire County Council
Standard Weekly Allowance for 16 – 18 years placement	£405	£402	£390	£425	£398	£416	£419

Proposals

5.13 **Supporting Foster Care Policy:** The Council is a large employer in West Berkshire and therefore would want to support our staff if they were to consider becoming foster carers, As a Council, we are committed to helping make a difference for foster carers and the children they care for in our local community, and improving the support for our employees who foster a child/children, enabling them to balance employment with looking after children.

5.14 This proposal would be to introduce a policy as a Fostering Friendly employer, we would offer foster carers flexible working and up to 5 additional days of paid time off for training per annum, settling a new child into their home and for ongoing responsibilities such as statutory case reviews and meetings with the case worker. The Personnel Committee has approved the Supporting Foster Care Policy. Once this policy is in place, we would seek to advocate for such policies to be introduced in other local businesses and organisations.

5.15 **Foster Care Recruitment:** it is proposed that the Local Authority seeks to appoint a Foster Care Recruitment post in the Family Placement Team. With the continued rise in the children in care population, it is proposed that a dedicated post focussing on the recruitment of foster carers is created, this post will be responsible for the practical promotion, advertising and recruitment activity associated with foster care recruitment.

5.16 A proposed job description and employee specification is included in the appendices. The post will need to be created and presented for evaluation, but we anticipate it is likely to be assessed at grade H, £30,151-£35,411 before oncosts. The recent regional fostering bid has been successful and will provide financial support that should cover the expenditure required to cover the post for 18 months.

5.17 **Remuneration and allowances for foster carers:** It is proposed that foster care allowances are increased from 1st April 2024, currently an uplift is planned for 3.5%,

Fostering in West Berkshire

however to become more attractive an uplift of 5% or 10% could be considered. In addition, a number of other Local Authorities provide council tax exemption or reductions for foster carers as an incentive to become or continue as a foster carer.

<u>Fostering rate increase of 3.5%</u>				
	-	-	New Rate	Increase Value
	<u>Age From</u>	<u>To</u>		
	0	4	£243.54	£8.24
	5	10	£277.41	£9.38
	11	15	£402.92	£13.63
	16	18	£420.03	£14.20
<u>Fostering rate increase of 5%</u>				
	-	-	New Rate	Increase Value
	<u>Age From</u>	<u>To</u>		
	0	4	£247.07	£11.77
	5	10	£281.43	£13.40
	11	15	£408.75	£19.46
	16	18	£426.12	£20.29
<u>Fostering rate increase of 7.5%</u>				
	-	-	New Rate	Increase Value
	<u>Age From</u>	<u>To</u>		
	0	4	£252.95	£17.65
	5	10	£288.13	£20.10
	11	15	£418.49	£29.20
	16	18	£436.27	£30.44
<u>Fostering rate increase of 10%</u>				
	-	-	New Rate	Increase Value
	<u>Age From</u>	<u>To</u>		
	0	4	£258.83	£23.53
	5	10	£294.83	£26.80
	11	15	£428.22	£38.93
	16	18	£446.41	£40.58

5.18 Council Tax: In several Local Authorities, Fostering Households are exempt from paying Council Tax or have a reduction applied to the household. We currently have around 80 foster care households. Clearly some of these (particularly connected persons carers) will be paying a reduced council tax depending on their personal circumstances. If we were to give council tax exemption or reduction to all fostering households on the assumption that the average household would be in Band D costing £2,100, it is envisaged that this will carry a maximum financial pressure somewhere in the region of £150K if an exemption was applied to all the households, but graduated after that depending on the extent of the reduction applied.

- 5.19 **Regional Care Cooperatives:** West Berkshire Council is a member of the South Central Frameworks for both Independent Fostering Agencies and Residential Placements. This is a consortium of 14 Local Authorities established with the region to commission care from private providers, agreeing unified terms and conditions and negotiating placement costs for members. West Berkshire has been a member of the Frameworks since 2017. West Berkshire will continue to part of the regional frameworks as these are renegotiated over the coming years.
- 5.20 The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care in 2022 made strong statements on the way the market is not meeting current needs. Its key recommendation is that Local Authorities use their collective power to enhance the recruitment of foster carers through establishing new Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs). These RCCs will take on responsibility for the creation and running of all new public sector fostering in a region, as well as commissioning all not for-profit and private sector provided care for children as necessary.
- 5.21 It is suggested that the scale and specialist capabilities of RCCs will address the current weaknesses in the system and establish organisations able to transform the care system for the future. Local Authorities will have direct involvement in the running of RCCs, but to work they must be mandated rather than voluntary arrangements. Children will continue to be in the care of individual local authorities. West Berkshire has expressed our interest in being part of an RCC pilot in the South East of England, the bid was submitted in September and was confirmed to be successful in October for an 18 month pilot.
- 5.22 **Expanding the Independent Fostering Agency market locally:** Our provider of Supported Lodgings (Step By Step) is a registered charity and is in the process of setting up an IFA agency in addition to their supported lodgings scheme. They have had a registered manager in post for a number of months and are in the process of meeting the regulatory requirements with Ofsted. Their experience is with teenagers and young adults and they are hoping to convert some of their supported lodgings carers to foster carers. We have held a number of discussions with them about our needs and they are keen to work with us a ‘preferred partner’ given our long history of working well together. We are hoping to have our first matches for children in 2023.

6 Other options considered

This paper covers a variety of options some or all of which could be adopted, and varying degrees could be considered – the main aim of the proposals is to increase the recruitment of foster carers. It could be decided to do nothing and maintain the existing recruitment arrangements, however it is likely that we will fall short of the desired outcome to significantly increase the number of foster carers in West Berkshire.

7 Conclusion

Recruiting and retaining foster carers is a priority. They provide the most effective care for our vulnerable children, therefore ensuring that we have the correct environment and context to recruit them is vital. The proposals contained in this report provide opportunities for West Berkshire to develop our approach and increase the number of foster carers locally.

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Job Description

Appendix B – Supporting Foster Care Policy

Officer details:

Name: Dave Wraight
Job Title: Service Manager Children and Family Services
Tel No: 01635 519735
E-mail: dave.wraight@westberks.gov.uk

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Job Description and Person Specification

Job title:	Recruitment and Publicity Officer
Directorate:	People
Service:	Children and Families
Team:	Family Placement Team
Post number:	
Salary grade:	
Work location:	Market St
Reports to:	ATM Family Placement Team
Supervises:	None

Job Purpose

The recruitment of foster carers is a key priority for the service to enable children to live locally and with carers with the appropriate skills and experience when they cannot remain within their own family.

- To work as a member of the Family Placement Team leading on recruitment and publicity opportunities to attract families to foster for West Berkshire.
- Expand our working relationships with internal and external stakeholder's.
- Support the development, implementation and review of the fostering recruitment strategy.
- To raise the awareness of private fostering.

Structure Chart

Service Manager Children in Care

Team Manager- Family Placement Team

Assistant Team Managers

Supervising Social Workers – Recruitment and Publicity Officer – Family Support Workers

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- To produce and implement an annual recruitment and publicity strategy for increasing the number and range of foster carers for West Berkshire.
- Use own initiative to source and develop relationships with community groups and local businesses to engage them in recruitment and support activities for foster carers and other family placement activities. This can include attending a range of events on

Main Duties and Responsibilities

weekends on occasion, especially during the summer months.

- Work with existing foster carers to engage their support in recruitment and retention activities.
- Promptly respond to all initial enquiries from prospective carers and ensure the timeliness of the onward process for assessment.
- To support with the co-ordination and attendance of Initial Home Visits, and field general fostering related enquiries and questions. These can include visits on weekday evenings on occasion.
- Ensure that there are effective systems in place to ensure that a positive customer service experience delivered at all times. Support with the regional mystery shopped initiatives.
- Provide quarterly reports in relation to recruitment activity- numbers of enquiries and progress of assessments. Collate data to report on the recruitment and assessment process.
- Ensure that public information is effectively distributed and displayed both internally and throughout the Borough. Copywriting and proof-reading all materials. Creating online assets in line with brand guidelines.
- To work in collaboration with the Corporate Communications Team to draft press releases and promote activities within the service, locally and at national fostering events.
- Managing the digital media marketing, using various forms of social media and email marketing. Lead on content creation and manage social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) and act as administrator for social media pages.
- Ensure that marketing and publicity resource information is up to date and distributed accordingly.
- To support the development of the website and other social media accounts, working with colleagues to ensure that it adequately reflects and contains the appropriate information relating to carers.
- Undertake such other duties as may from time to time be necessary, compatible with the nature of the post.
- Promote equality as an integral part of the role, treating everyone with fairness and dignity.
- Comply with WBC health and safety policies, procedures and rules, taking reasonable care of self and others.
- Adhere to the standards set out in the WBC competency framework.

Scope (impact on/control of resources, people, money etc)

There are no budgetary or supervisory responsibilities but post holder is responsible for forward planning and maintaining an accurate log of expenditure, responsible to the Team Manager to sign off on expenses.

The role requires creative thinking, analysis in relation to which modes of advertising elicit the greater response and building partnerships with other organisations in the local community to raise awareness and prompt people to enquire about Fostering.

All employees working with children, young people and vulnerable adults have a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

All employees working with children and young people must demonstrate a commitment to the

principles of participatory practice and the involvement of young people in decisions which affect them.

Commitment to the Council's Equal Opportunities policy at all times

Commitment to working within the bounds of the Data Protection Act and GDPR legislation at all times

Person Specification	Essential/ Desirable	Internal Use Only
Qualifications		
Degree in relevant discipline and or experience of working in a complex media and marketing environment or equivalent demonstrable experience.	D	
Recognised qualification in media, journalism or communications or social work qualification	D	
Experience		
A minimum of 2 years experience of working in recruitment, marketing or media environment or working in a fostering team and carrying out recruitment and publicity work	D	
Experience of using social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) and also Google Ads.	E	
Knowledge and understanding		
Knowledge of Children's Social Care and in particular Fostering.	D	
Understanding of and commitment to the requirements of safeguarding children, young people, vulnerable adults and promoting their welfare.	E	
To demonstrate an insight into the needs of children, the reasons they come into care and the skills needed to look after them.	E	
Understanding when to work under own autonomy, utilising own judgement and when to seek advice and guidance from the right place and at the right time to effectively manage media risks/ issues		
Skills and abilities		
Ability to use Outlook, and a web browser to access information	E	
Basic ability to use Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc)	E	
Excellent people skills	E	
Ability to prioritise workload	E	
Exceptional copywriting skills that translate complex information and	E	

jargon into plain English, customer- focussed and engaging copy, and tailor this to each channel		
Excellent oral communication skills, with the ability to constructively challenge and probe, and to communicate effectively to, senior stakeholders while earning their confidence	E	
Work-related personal qualities		
Willingness and ability to prioritise and deliver on a complex and frequently changing workload	E	
Highly effective interpersonal and empathetic skills	E	
Demonstrable influencing & leadership skills	D	
Confident, creative and articulate	E	
A highly effective team player	E	
Other work-related requirements		
This role has been identified as public facing in accordance with Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2017; the requirement to fulfil all spoken aspects of the role with confidence in English applies.	E	
Enhanced DBS check with relevant barred list/s	Yes	
Is this post politically restricted?	No	
The post holder must hold a full UK driving licence (or valid equivalent). Non-UK licences must be converted to UK licences in the first six months of employment.		
Good physical health as on occasion there will be a requirement to lift and carry marketing and event related items.		

Supporting Foster Care Policy and Procedure

Document Control

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Version:	1	Date Modified:	
Revision due	February 2028		
Author:	Rebecca Hopkins	Sign & Date:	
Owning Service	Human Resources		
Equality Impact Assessment: (EIA)	Date undertaken:		
	Issues (if any):		

Chief Executive	Sign & Date:	
Corporate Director (Communities)	Sign & Date:	
Corporate Director (Economy and Environment)	Sign & Date:	

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1	Feb 2023	New policy	
2			
3			

This Policy is not for publication externally

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draft

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Council is committed to helping make a difference for foster carers and the children they care for in our local community and, improving the support for our employees who foster a child/children, enabling them to balance employment with looking after children.
- 1.2 As a Fostering Friendly employer, we offer foster carers flexible working and up to 5 additional days of paid time off for training, settling a new child into their home and for ongoing responsibilities such as statutory case reviews and meetings with the case worker.
- 1.3 Personal Committee has approved the Supporting Foster Care Policy.

2. Applicability

- 2.1 This Policy applies to:
 - 2.1.1 All non-school based employees working for the Council, who are registered Foster Carers and have a child/children in their care.
 - 2.1.2 The policy is not applicable to employees who are undertaking 'fostering for adoption'; there are separate arrangements, included in the council's adoption procedure, for these employees.
- 2.2 Adherence to this Policy is a condition of working for the council or using its assets.
- 2.3 This Policy has had consultation with trade unions and has been ratified by the Council's Corporate Board.

3. Policy

- 3.1 The council will offer an additional allowance of paid time off for eligible employees of up to 5 days per year. Up to one day of this additional leave may be used by employees being assessed as foster carers during the assessment period. Where two employees are 'jointly' fostering a child/children, they should agree who is to receive the additional leave; only one will be eligible.
- 3.2 For employees who foster more than one child, the manager will seek advice from the Fostering Team Manager and will apply discretionary, additional paid or unpaid days if and as required to best meet the needs of any statutory review / management of incident crisis.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 Managers are responsible for:
 - 4.1.1 approving requests for time off received from eligible employees and keeping a local record of these, and the days taken, ensuring the maximum is not exceeded

4.1.2 informing Payroll of any additional leave due to be taken which will be unpaid.

4.2 Employees will:

4.2.1 in all cases, inform their manager they are a foster carer and eligible/no longer eligible for the additional leave

4.2.2 familiarise themselves with, and adhere to, this policy and procedure

4.2.3 when in a 'joint fostering arrangement', provide written notification to the Fostering Team Manager, and if appropriate their manager, of their decision as to who will receive the 5 days additional leave. The notification must be signed by both employees

4.2.4 when requesting the additional leave, complete the [Request for Additional Leave form](#).

4.3 Fostering Team Manager will:

4.3.1 in 'joint fostering' they will send the written notification of the foster carers' election to receive or, to enable the other employee who is in the 'joint fostering' arrangement, to receive the additional leave to the manager

4.4 Human Resources will:

4.4.1 review and maintain this policy and provide advice and guidance on its implementation.

5. Procedure

5.1 To confirm eligibility, the employee will give their line manager a copy of their invitation to the Skills to Foster training. Once the employee is approved they will receive a letter confirming they are approved as a carer, which can also be provided to the line manager.

5.2 Managers are required to review the eligibility on an annual basis with their staff.

5.3 When requesting time off under this policy the [Request for Additional Leave form](#) will be used.

5.4 Time off will be approved in full or half days under this scheme.

6. Failure to comply with WBC Supporting Foster Carers Policy

6.1 This document provides staff and others with essential information regarding how the Council supports foster carers and sets out conditions to be followed. It is the responsibility of all to whom this Policy document applies to adhere to these conditions. Failure to do so may result in:

- withdrawal of access to relevant services
- informal disciplinary processes
- formal disciplinary action under the disciplinary procedure

7. Review

- 7.1 This Policy does not form part of the employee's contract of employment and the council retains the right to review and change the Policy at any time, ensuring that it complies with current employment legislation and the requirements of the council. Trade Unions will be consulted on any significant changes.
- 7.2 This policy will be reviewed to respond to any changes and at least every 5 years.
- 7.3 Human Resources is responsible for reviewing and maintaining this Policy.

draft

Other Relevant Documentation

[Adoption Procedure](#)

[Additional Leave Procedure](#)

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Foster Care Scrutiny

28th November 2023

Types of Care

- ❑ Kinship Care
- ❑ Foster Care – West Berkshire Council (in house)
- ❑ Foster Care – Independent Fostering Agency
- ❑ Residential Care – Childrens Homes
- ❑ Supported living - for some 16 & 17 year olds

Foster Care Recruitment process

- ❑ Initial enquiry - on line or by phone
- ❑ Contact for initial discussion/screening within 24hrs
- ❑ Social worker allocated for initial visit within 5 days-
assessment completed covering:
 - employment
 - education
 - availability
 - motivation to foster
 - household members
 - experience of caring for children
 - home environment
 - health
- ❑ Background Checks, references and medicals undertaken

Foster care approval

- ❑ Training- 'Skills to Foster'
- ❑ Social Worker completes comprehensive report and presents to foster panel
- ❑ Foster carer approved for:
 - A given number of children
 - An age range
- ❑ Annual reviews at panel for continued registration

Connected Persons carers (Kinship)

- ❑ Immediate approval for a 'connected person' as a foster carer for 16 weeks (can be extended to 24 weeks)
- ❑ Support and allowances equivalent to mainstream carers
- ❑ Social worker completes a connected persons assessment
- ❑ Presented to fostering panel for approval to care for a specific child

Data and trends – recruitment January 2023 to date

Skills to Foster Course	4 organised 3 held 1 cancelled due to low numbers prior to groups
Skills to Foster Attendees	15
Enquiries made	55
Initial visits made	25
Applications sent out	23
Application forms received following on Skills to Foster Course	5
Carers currently under assessment	4
Carers approved since January 2023	3
Expected approvals by April 2024 depending on receipt of the application form	13

Data and trends - retention

Foster Carers	Oct 21	Jan 22	Apr 22	Jul 22	Oct 22	Jan 23	Apr 23	Jul 23	Oct 23
Number of new foster carers recruited - YTD (commencing in April)	11	14	1	4	7	11	1	8	13
Number of foster carers that have left - YTD (commencing in April)	8	13	2	14	17	19	0	2	6

Reasons for foster carers leaving:

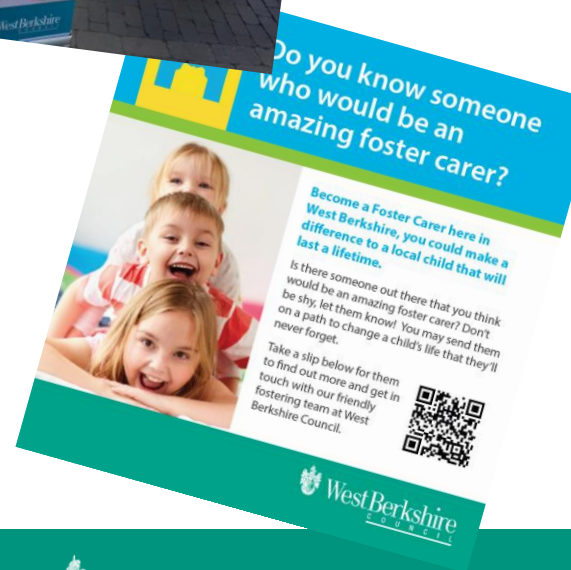
- Lapsed approvals- No children cared for
- Resignations due to changes in circumstances
- Children remaining under a staying put arrangement
- Carers applying for an SGO

No foster carer moved to another LA or IFA during this period.

Regional Comparison Data

	Any and all contact in 2022/2023	Number that went to Stage 1	Conversion %
Reading	340	11	3%
Slough	126	10	8%
Southampton	146	14	10%
Hampshire	1067	110	10%
West Sussex	237	25	11%
Oxfordshire	215	24	11%
Portsmouth	237	29	12%
Bracknell Forest	36	5	14%
Wokingham	76	11	14%
Surrey	221	33	15%
West Berks	51	8	16%
Brighton and Hove	117	19	16%
Medway	125	21	17%
Milton Keynes	62	11	18%
Kent	691	132	19%
Isle of Wight	57	12	21%
East Sussex	274	79	29%
RBWM	18	6	33%

Raising the profile



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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

Committee considering report:	Scrutiny Commission
Date of Committee:	28 November 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lee Dillon
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	16 November 2023
Report Author:	Pamela Voss – EDI Officer. Initial draft by Sam Shepherd – Programme Manager, Local Communities
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4354

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to present a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework for agreement.
- 1.2 It outlines the context for the new Framework, summarises the evidence base for the work and recommends agreement of the Framework as a replacement to the Council’s Equality Policy. It also recommends the adoption of a new Equality Impact Assessment.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is RECOMMENDED that the Scrutiny Commission notes and makes comment as appropriate on the following, before they go to Executive for approval on 14 December 2023:
 - a) the evidence base contained within Appendix C and D for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, including the changes within West Berkshire which requires a new approach.
 - b) the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, as contained within Appendix E, which includes a draft EDI Action Plan for the next 12 months.
 - c) the new Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix F for use in assessing the impact of decisions and changes on diverse groups within our communities.
 - d) the updated Action Plan (separate updated document Sept 2023) additional Appendix G.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>There are some direct financial implications for the Council arising from this report and its proposals as the current financial situation is challenging and restricted budget overall.</p> <p>£9,820 of Transformation Funding has already been secured and allocated to training which was to be guided by the outcome of the Framework.</p> <p>As discussed with the Chief Executive, there is no new resource at present to deliver the proposed Action Plan (Appendix G) some aspects will be delivered within existing resources. An investment bid will be coming forward in the future. Consideration needs to be given to enhancing the current EDI post to a 1:0 FTE or additional resource to support the delivery of possible actions and substantial workload, to enable to progress the actions moving forward. Priorities need to be identified in regard of the PSED.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>There will be some significant HR implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals. In addition, staff training needs need to be considered.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>This report ensures that the Council can meet its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010), the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the Armed Forces Act (2021).</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>The risks arising from this report are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Legal challenge - should the Council not implement the EDI Framework, it risks being in breach of its PSED obligations. b) It is proposed the Council go beyond the Protected Characteristics referenced in current legislation and take into consideration additional West Berkshire needs when making decisions that will impact specific communities i:e Rural, Racing, Armed Forces, Care Leavers, other transient and displaced groups; also those in deprived areas. <p>Budget restrictions – due to the current financial position of WBC, there is a reduction in spending. Work has begun on delivering the Action Plan which will support mitigations to prevent the Council breaching its obligations within the PSED.</p>

	Council reputation – potential adverse publicity should the Council breach its obligations set out within the PSED, damaging its reputation and incurring Judicial Review costs which are usually high.			
Property:	There are no direct property implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.			
Policy:	There are no national policies which relate to this report or its proposals. The <i>Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (2022)</i> is an important review for this work.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:	X			
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The proposals outlined in this report will have a positive impact on protected characteristics as it seeks to drive greater equality and inclusion.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The proposals outlined in this report will have a positive impact on protected characteristics as it seeks to drive greater equality and inclusion.
Environmental Impact:		X		There are no direct environmental implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.
Health Impact:	X			The proposals outlined in this report will help deliver the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy which seeks to deliver on all aspects of improved health and wellbeing.

ICT Impact:		X		There are no IT implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.
Digital Services Impact:		X		There are no digital implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			<p>The proposals in this report will help to improve the following Council strategy priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential <p>The proposals outlined in this report directly deliver an action in the Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023.</p>
Core Business:	X			The proposals outlined in this report will support a stronger communities.
Data Impact:			X	There are no data or data protection implications for the Council arising from this report or its proposals.
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>To ensure our new EDI Framework is driven by the perspectives and experiences of those living and/or working in West Berkshire, The Equal Group consultants conducted an engagement exercise for the Council. We received 388 responses to a long survey and 159 to a shorter (easy to read) survey. To supplement the survey data, a series of five focus groups were run to explore the views of stakeholders on EDI issues in West Berkshire. As part of the adoption process, it will be necessary to ensure co-production across all directorates and further engagement with staff is essential. Therefore, the Staff Equality Forum will be a key voice.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 As community leaders and one of West Berkshire's major employers, we want to lead by example and take action to ensure everyone in West Berkshire is provided with the

opportunity to thrive. This report presents a new “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework” for approval by West Berkshire Council.

- 4.2 The primary legislative foundation for this Framework lies within the Equality Act 2010 (EA); it states that public bodies, including Councils need to take extra steps to stop discrimination: this is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. The EA replaced the race, disability and gender equality duties providing Britain with a new anti-discriminatory law to protect individuals from unfair treatment and to promote a more fair and equal society.
- 4.3 References to “equality” may be a familiar term to most; it essentially means providing the same to all. As the equality agenda has evolved, other terms have been used too, including diversity and inclusion. The term “equity” has emerged and also needs to be considered to create fairness and justice in all decision making and everything we undertake.
- 4.4 WBC has an obligation and is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, therefore this new EDI Framework will replace the Council's Equality Policy by responding to the evidence base findings within the data and stakeholder feedback for this Framework and by publishing new equity objectives for the next four years.
- 4.5 This report highlights the need for change, describes the process we have undertaken to develop a new EDI Framework and sets out proposals to make changes to move forward. It concludes by recommending the approval of the Framework, its associated action plan and a reviewed Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) template.

5 Introduction/Background

Introduction

The following key factors outline the necessity of a new EDI Framework.

Background

- 5.1 The primary legislative driver for considering equalities, diversity and inclusion is the Equality Act 2010, which requires Local Authorities under Section 149 to fulfil the Public Sector Equality Duty and consider the nine Protected Characteristics when developing policy, delivering services and employing people. It means that as a Council it should consider equality as part of its daily business to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
 - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not,
 - Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

- Publish information, at least annually; to demonstrate it complies with the PSED. This includes information about employees e.g. The Gender Pay gap, also information about the public who are affected the Council's policies and procedures.

5.2 There are nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. The Equality Act 2010 explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Armed Forces Act (2021)

5.3 The Armed Forces Act 2021 is a relatively new change to the legislative context for the Council's EDI approach. It further enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant into law to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing public services. The Act introduces a duty to have "due regard" to the following principles of the Armed Forces Covenant:

- The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces
- The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces
- The principle that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.

5.4 This means there is a need to build on the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant to help prevent service personnel, reservists, veterans and their families being disadvantaged when accessing essential services like healthcare, education and housing.

Independent Review of Children's Social Care (2022)

5.5 An Independent Review of Children's Social Care¹ was published on 23rd May 2022. The review engaged with around 2000 people with lived experience of children's social care and around 2,800 people with professional experience of children's social care. The resulting report outlines 80 recommendations and a five-year £2.6 billion reform plan.

5.6 The report found that care experienced people frequently experience discrimination even from a very young age, which can be similar in nature to other groups that have a legally protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010). The report therefore

¹ [Independent review of children's social care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/112422/independent-review-of-childrens-social-care-report.pdf)

recommends that England should be the first country in the world to make “care experience” a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act.

- 5.7 Although the Government is yet to respond to this recommendation; it has been made in recognition of the poor outcomes for those with care experience. Those who have care experience make up a significant proportion of the homeless population, prison population and young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Adults who spent time in care have also been found to be significantly more likely to die prematurely than those who did not.
- 5.8 West Berkshire Council holds 'Corporate Parenting' responsibility for local children who are looked after by the Local Authority. This means there is collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after. There is an opportunity to reflect the recommendation of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in the Council's new EIA approach.

Not everyone has equity to thrive

- 5.9 International events, national reviews and shifts in the local population over the last few years have highlighted inequity within communities. Such as the disproportionate impact of Covid-19, the increasing cost of living, from an aging population to recent displacement of communities around the world; we know that the potential for inequity exists locally. This includes the following:
- Not everyone has economic equity. Most of West Berkshire falls into the category of the 50% least deprived in England but six neighbourhoods fall into the category of the top 50% most deprived in England.
 - The data shows that 6.6% of West Berkshire households are experiencing fuel poverty. Homes that are cold due to fuel poverty exacerbate health inequalities; for example cold homes can cause and worsen respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health, dementia, hypothermia and problems with childhood development.
 - West Berkshire, like the South East and England as a whole has a growing population of people over 65 years old. The distribution of ages across the population also shows a dip in population size between the 10 to 14 year and 20 to 24 year age bracket.
 - West Berkshire is an area less ethnically diverse than England and the South East as a whole. Most residents identify as White (94.8%). Of the West Berkshire residents who identify as a non-White ethnic minority, most residents identify as Asian / Asian British (2.5%), Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (0.9%) or mixed / part of multiple ethnic groups (1.6%). This creates a very small minority, which can experience exclusion and isolation.
 - Gypsies, Roma and Travellers officially make up 0.1% of West Berkshire; although it is often difficult to determine exact figures for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities for a variety of reasons, including historic persecution (leading to non-disclosure) and nomadic lifestyles. Although a small minority, GRT communities frequently represent some of the most disadvantaged people in the country.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

- Rural households in West Berkshire are more likely to experience fuel poverty, digital exclusion and food deserts (limited access to affordable and nutritious food) than those in more urban areas.
- 13.2% of West Berkshire residents report having a limiting long-term illness or disability. Census data shows that West Berkshire's residents are generally less impacted by life-limiting illnesses and disabilities.
- West Berkshire has a higher proportion of children with Autism known to schools 33.5 per 1,000 population compared to the South East (19.3 per 1,000) and England (18 per 1,000).
- Carers in West Berkshire are most likely to be looking after someone 65 years or over. Carers commonly feel they are lacking some social contact (47.7%) or feel socially isolated (13.9%), as well as lacking control over their lives (58.5%).
- At a national level² the outcomes for care experienced people today are extremely poor. It is estimated that 26% of the homeless population have care experience; 24% of the prison population in England have spent time in care; that 41% of 19-21 year old care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12% of all other young people in the same age group and adults who spent time in care between 1971-2001 were 70% more likely to die prematurely than those who did not.
- West Berkshire has a small and unique community around the Armed Forces station at Denison Barracks whose community can often be very diverse and transient. Although they have good relationships with local services, Hermitage is not well connected by transportation links, so it can be a difficult transition for those families that can make it to the area, especially for spouses who cannot drive or have limited English.
- There is a racing community largely centred in the Lambourn Valley which is unique, both within West Berkshire and across England more generally. Initial engagement exercises with these communities indicate that there may be more transient and hidden labour communities than captured in data, who may struggle to access local services given language, transport and other similar challenges.

5.10 The diversity in our communities is a strength and does not result in disadvantage or exclusion by themselves. The examples given above outline where inequity can exist in West Berkshire. The data shows that the majority of residents and communities in West Berkshire are thriving, however; there are some minority communities who do not currently have the same opportunities to thrive. There are no prominent minority groups within West Berkshire based upon race, faith, disability, age or other protected characteristic, but a diverse range dispersed across the county.

5.11 This means that to ensure everyone can benefit from the opportunities in West Berkshire, WBC need to think about how our Council and other public services work, so that they focus on being inclusive for everyone.

² [The-care-experience.pdf \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](#)

6 Supporting Information

6.1 Our future approach to EDI needs to reflect the legal and policy context outlined above. It also need to reflect our local population profile and where inequality is felt within our communities. To deliver the evidence-base for our new Framework, we commissioned the expert and independent support of consultants to conduct two pieces of work. The first was an EDI Needs Assessment to give us a detailed picture of the local population and the second was to undertake engagement on EDI issues within West Berkshire with both staff and residents. Together these form the evidence-base of the proposed Framework contained within Appendix E.

EDI Needs Assessment

6.2 An EDI Needs Assessment was undertaken by the Temple Group consultants on behalf of the Council. This drew upon existing data available to outline information on the protected characteristics and other local factors which may cause disadvantage.

6.3 A full report with the details of the methodology, data and analysis can be found in Appendix C. In summary, the findings suggest that when looking at the demographics for the local authority as a whole, West Berkshire is relatively affluent and generally reflective of regional and national averages. However, further analysis of smaller geographical areas and of hidden communities reveals that the local authority area faces a range of specific challenges. These challenges must be acknowledged if all residents of West Berkshire are to be supported through appropriate and proportionate methods.

6.4 Some of the key issues emerging from the data analysis include:

- Recognising the challenges that are associated with the urban-rural split such as accessing public services and transport, accessing social and community infrastructure, concentrations of fuel poverty, also urban-linked deprivation.
- Understanding that, although West Berkshire is largely ethnically homogeneous (94.8% White British), minority and marginalised communities with varied needs are dispersed across the district. These include the racing community, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, asylum seekers and refugees, armed service members and their families, and veterans.
- Considering West Berkshire's ageing population will be crucial to supporting vulnerable people as the district's population already has a large proportion of elderly residents (aged 60 years and older) and this is forecast to be a growing demographic; and
- Developing a more nuanced understanding of communities and how they are supported by the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector will aid the Council in both fulfilling its equalities duties and responding to framework objectives, especially as there are community and protected characteristics that are not currently well understood, as well as how different circumstances and characteristics interact with each other.

EDI Engagement

- 6.5 To ensure our new EDI Framework is driven by the perspectives and experiences of those living and/or working in West Berkshire, The Equal Group consultants conducted an engagement exercise for the Council. This consisted of an EDI survey which opened on the 18th of October 2022 and closed on 4th of December 2022.
- 6.6 A shorter version of the survey was created in recognition of the complexity of the issues. We extended the original survey timetable to target and encourage underrepresented groups to respond. We received 388 responses to the long survey and 159 to the shorter (easy to read) survey.
- 6.7 To supplement the survey data, a series of five focus groups were run to explore the views of stakeholders on EDI issues in West Berkshire. Focus groups were held with the following groups in November and December of 2022:
- Cross-party Councillor representatives
 - Council internal “Equality Forum”
 - Officer group working on equality and public engagement
 - Voluntary and Community Sector partners
 - Public Sector partners.
- 6.8 A summary report of the findings can be found in Appendix D, they suggest that following key themes are priority areas for the Council to address:
- Disability and accessibility
 - Other access barriers:
 - Rurality
 - Socio-economic exclusion
 - Age-related exclusion
 - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities
 - Displaced individuals.

Changing community needs

7 Options for consideration

- 7.1 Alongside the data about West Berkshire and the feedback from our staff and community, there has been some significant changes which are important to bear in mind as they impact on our EDI approach for the future. Including:
- **Covid-19.** The pandemic revealed some new vulnerabilities in communities and it has shifted the way people relate to service providers e.g. digitally services.
 - **Afghan resettlement.** In 2021, the Taliban re-took control of Afghanistan after twenty years following the withdrawal of foreign troops and so some Afghan citizens were offered relocation to the UK. People arriving from Afghanistan have arrived in hotels

in West Berkshire and have needed support from the Council and other service providers.

- **Homes for Ukraine.** In February 2022, Russia launched a war against the Ukraine and in response The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched. This scheme has meant people from Ukraine have arrived in the homes of residents of West Berkshire; both local residents and their Ukrainian guests have needed help and support from the Council and other service providers.
- **Hong Kong Nationals.** Following civil unrest in Hong Kong, a number of people have independently relocated to many places across the world, including West Berkshire. The scale of this relocation is unknown but has been seen locally in a rise in Hong Kong nationals seeking help, support and signposting.
- **Asylum seekers.** With a number of active conflicts around in the world, people have sought refuge in the UK. In West Berkshire, refugees are housed by the Home Office during the processing of their asylum applications and whilst the Home Office retains responsibilities for asylum seekers, the Council and others are involved in providing support to refugees in the local community.
- **Cost of living.** Throughout the course of 2022, there was a significant rise in inflation and therefore the cost of living. This has increased the number of people in the community who have needed to access support with issues such as debt, home energy and food provision.

8 Proposals

- 8.1 Implementation of the EDI Framework will require its guiding principle of 'everyone has responsibility' to come to the fore as introducing a new Framework will not deliver change in itself. Responsibility for delivery is dispersed across the Council and will therefore need a coordinated effort and the new framework sets the structure and the draft Action Plan will be key to achieving change.
- 8.2 The EDI Framework, including the draft Action Plan have been shared with the EDI Board on 21st July 2023. Feedback included a discussion about the importance of language used is consistent across all WBC's other strategic documentation such as The Council Strategy and The Behaviour Framework. It is essential to maintain a 'golden thread' throughout all pieces of work to ensure both visions and values are clear to all. A key aspect of the approach WBC takes will depend on the cost and resource implications, as both the EDI and Workforce Boards will cease in September 2023.
- 8.3 Overall, the EDI Framework was well received, but some gaps were identified such as reference to carers, proposals for transport initiatives (which at present cannot be committed to due to budget constraints) and identifying 'young mums' as a group was highlighted. A number of actions are already in progress with established resources available within the community e.g. Family Hubs, the proactive use of our libraries and the commissioned organisation, Educafe; who's contract concludes at the end of March 2024. In agreement, training needs were recognised as important to aid the establishment of the EDI Framework.
- 8.4 Delivery of an action to revise the EIA process is also included in the proposals within this report. The next steps are to continue the focus on actions identified, with their respective timeframes and to embed principles of the Framework. In light of the Internal

Governance Review, actions will need to sit across the remaining five delivery boards. There are multiple changes due to the current budgetary position and a transformational phase WBC are in at present. Therefore, the updated separate Action Plan (Appendix G) contains suggestions of where actions and responsibilities may be based.

- 8.5 £9,820 of Transformation Funding has already been secured as part of the development of the new Framework, which has been allocated for EDI training. This area was identified to develop better knowledge and understanding about EDI topics, by the consultants and HR suggest there may be some additional resource available to add to this. In addition advice from external EDI experts may need to be sought to progress WBC with Stonewall accreditation in the near future. This will align with one of the goals of the newly elected Liberal Democrat administration, to demonstrate WB is a good place to work.
- 8.6 The consultants proposed the draft Action Plan will be refreshed on an annual basis to ensure progress against the EDI objectives. The progress of the EDI Framework will be understood, both by successful delivery of the actions, also measurable impact; for example the following long-term outcomes:
- Narrowing the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived wards in West Berkshire
 - Fewer households living with fuel poverty.
 - Those with disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health issues or caring responsibilities being supported to have equal educational, health and economic opportunities.
- 8.7 Locally the EDI Framework will seek to influence the following:
- a) Increased numbers of staff who report that West Berkshire Council is a place where 'everyone has an equal opportunity to develop' (increased from 60% in 2021).
 - b) Increased numbers of staff who report that West Berkshire Council ensures that all people are treated fairly and equally (increased from 66% in 2021).
 - c) Increased numbers of residents reporting that they feel strongly or very strongly that West Berkshire is a place they 'belong to' (increased from 73% in 2021).
 - d) Increase in the numbers of residents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background who report feeling strongly or very strongly that they belong to West Berkshire (increased from 66% in 2021).

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 In recognition of the changes in the national legislative and policy context, the local demographic profile and the views of local people West Berkshire Council has taken the opportunity to put in place a new EDI Framework.
- 9.2 This report has summarised the evidence base for the work and recommends agreement of the Framework as a replacement to the Council's Equality Policy. It also recommends the adoption of a new Equality Impact Assessment which takes an expanded view of EDI, taking considerations beyond that covered in the Equality Act

(2010). This demonstrates West Berkshire Council’s ambition to go ‘above and beyond’ to shape a West Berkshire where **everyone** can thrive.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes

- 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 Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees or Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

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Author:	Initial author – Sam Shepherd, Editor - Pamela Voss		
Owning Service	People - Communities and Wellbeing		

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1	10.03.2023	EDI Framework	
2	08.08.2023	EDI Framework – new template	

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:
 - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;*
 - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;**
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.**
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.*
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.*

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	To agree the adoption of the EDI Framework
Summary of relevant legislation:	Public Sector Equality Duty
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council’s priorities for improvement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	No If yes, please indicate which priority and provide an explanation
Name of Budget Holder:	Susan Powell
Name of Service/Directorate:	People – Communities and Wellbeing
Name of assessor:	Pamela Voss
Date of assessment:	08.08.2023
Version and release date (if applicable):	

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

(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To meet legislation requirements of the Equality act 2010 and to increase equal opportunities
Objectives:	To ensure WB is an area everyone can thrive
Outcomes:	To reduce inequalities
Benefits:	To benefit all communities and services

(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
Age	Positive – reduce NEET, digital exclusion, barriers to housing, employment and services.	EDI Needs Assessment and engagement during development of EDI Framework.
Disability	Positive – improve accessibility to services – health, transport, education. Support for carers.	As above
Gender Reassignment	Positive – inclusion, better support networks, employment opportunities.	As above
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Positive – support with housing, childcare provision, food, financial and transport.	As above
Pregnancy and Maternity	Positive – accessibility to health and other key services.	As above
Race	Positive – inclusion in the community. Access to key services. Reduce accessibility barriers.	As above
Religion or Belief	Positive - inclusion in the community and access to key services. Improve understanding of all religions and beliefs.	As above
Sex	Positive – improve understanding of needs to ensure access to services.	As above
Sexual Orientation	Positive – inclusion in community and employment. Reduce discrimination.	As above

Further Comments:

--

(3) Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: more consideration in decision making and daily processes	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: better understanding of individuals' needs and reduction of barriers to employment and services	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a EqlA 2.

If an EqlA 2 is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the EqlA guidance and template – <http://intranet/index.aspx?articleid=32255>.

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:	
EqlA Stage 2 required	No
Owner of EqlA Stage Two:	N/A
Timescale for EqlA Stage Two:	N/A

Name: Pamela Voss

Date: 08.08.2023

Please now forward this completed form to Pamela Voss, Equality and Diversity Officer (pamela.voss@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.

Appendix B

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	People
Service:	Communities and Wellbeing
Team:	Building Communities Together
Lead Officer:	Pamela Voss
Title of Project/System:	Equality Diversity and Inclusion Framework
Date of Assessment:	08.08.2023

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
<p>Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data?</p> <p><i>Note – sensitive personal data is described as “ data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation”</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will you be processing data on a large scale?</p> <p><i>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension?</p> <p><i>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will any decisions be automated?</p> <p><i>Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

	Yes	No
Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes? <small>Note – this could include biometrics, “internet of things” connectivity or anything that is currently not widely utilised</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

Additional appendices:

Appendix C – EDI Needs Assessment

Appendix D – EDI Engagement Report (summary)

Appendix E – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework for agreement

Appendix F - Draft Equality Impact Assessment template for agreement

Appendix G – Action Plan (separate updated document)



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background and Scope

- 1.1.1 This Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Needs Assessment outlines the key trends and legal background West Berkshire Council must consider whilst developing their upcoming EDI Framework, as well as forecasting trends that should be integrated into the Council's EDI objectives and evaluation mechanisms. The Needs Assessment also provides further recommendations to ensure a robust understanding of West Berkshire's EDI needs is maintained beyond the scope of this work.
- 1.1.2 This Needs Assessment focuses on those protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010 and provides background on wider geographic and socio-economic indicators to define key trends which may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. As we are aware that a separate piece of work has been commissioned regarding public health inequalities these issues are not explored in this report. Additionally, whilst West Berkshire has close contact with and is therefore influenced by populations and infrastructure associated with Reading and nearby urban centres, this is also outside the geographic scope of this report.

1.2 Key Takeaways

- 1.2.1 As well as responding to the objectives within the Council Strategy, including supporting everyone to reach their full potential and ensuring that vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes, any upcoming EDI frameworks must also address West Berkshire's range of significant EDI challenges.
- 1.2.2 In analysing datasets about demographics for the local authority as a whole, it can be tempting to consider West Berkshire to be relatively affluent and generally reflective of regional and national averages. However, further analysis of smaller geographical areas and of hidden communities reveals that the local authority area faces a broad range of unique challenges. These challenges must be acknowledged if all citizens of West Berkshire are to be supported through appropriate and proportionate methods.
- 1.2.3 Some of the key issues emerging from our analysis include:
- Recognising the challenges that are associated with the urban-rural split such as accessing public services and transport, accessing social and community infrastructure, concentrations of fuel poverty, and urban-linked deprivation;

- Understanding that, although West Berkshire appears to be largely ethnically homogeneous (94.8% White British), minority and marginalised communities with varied needs are dispersed across the district. These include the racing community, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, asylum seekers and refugees, armed service members and their families, and veterans;
- Considering West Berkshire's aging population will be crucial to supporting vulnerable people as the district's population already has a large proportion of older residents (aged 60 years and older) and this is forecast to be a growing demographic; and
- Developing a more nuanced understanding of communities and how they are supported by the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector will aid the Council in both fulfilling its equalities duties and responding to framework objectives, especially as there are community and protected characteristics that are not currently well understood, as well as how different circumstances and characteristics interact with each other.

1.3 West Berkshire's Equality Duty

- 1.3.1 The primary legislative driver for considering equalities, diversity and inclusion is the Equality Act 2010, which requires local authorities under the Public Sector Equality Duty to consider the nine protected characteristics when developing policy, delivering services and employing people. This includes requirements for Councils to:
- Publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually; and
 - Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.
- 1.3.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to fulfil a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). In fulfilling the PSED public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.3.3 The Equality Act 2010 explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

1.3.4 Many of the duties included in the Equality Act can often not be fully understood by stakeholders including public sector officials, private sector suppliers, and the general population interacting with public services and facilities. As a result, local authorities like West Berkshire may be at risk of not fully fulfilling their duties, leaving them open to legal prosecution and judicial review. Local authorities are ultimately responsible for demonstrating their compliance with relevant legislation including showing that they have considered the protected characteristics in their decision-making process and how such consideration impacted final deliverables.

1.4 Looking Forward

- 1.4.1 The evidence presented here suggests West Berkshire Council must consider its equalities duty from a wider perspective in order to be fully compliant with both the letter and spirit of the Equality Act. Taking a more comprehensive approach will also support positive outcomes for more groups living in the district, including those who might normally be overlooked.
- 1.4.2 Ensuring that West Berkshire Council continues to monitor updated datasets, liaise with partner organisations, conduct qualitative research and engage with local communities will enable the Council to set clear and relevant EDI objectives which benefit the district's most vulnerable residents.

2 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This EDI Needs Assessment was prepared by Temple on behalf of West Berkshire Council to support the development of the Council's updated approach to EDI.
- 2.1.2 The Needs Assessment includes:
- A baseline assessment, which provides an overview of West Berkshire's demographic profile including geographic and socio-economic indicators, protected characteristics, and other relevant groups, as well as relevant historic and geographic benchmarks;
 - A policy and research review, which outlines the Council's duties under national and local legislation, sample EDI policy from other local authorities illustrating applicable best practice, and legal precedents illustrating the potential impacts of not complying with these existing policies; and
 - A forecast of key trends and issues West Berkshire may face in the near future, with recommendations to the Council to better address these changes and challenges.
- 2.1.3 This report provides an evidence base identifying West Berkshire's key existing EDI-related issues and vulnerable groups, which should then be carried forward in the development of more formal, and legally required, EDI policy. Such policy should include specific outcomes rooted in this evidence base as well as in those sources included in the recommendations made at the close of the Needs Assessment.

3 Baseline Assessment

3.1 Approach to the Baseline

- 3.1.1 The baseline assessment provides an overview of West Berkshire's demographic profile regarding equalities characteristics through the mapping of key geographic and socio-economic indicators, protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010¹, and other relevant groups.
- 3.1.2 The key geographic and socio-economic indicators included in this baseline are:
- Deprivation;
 - Land use and urban morphology;
 - District infrastructure;
 - Digital exclusion;
 - Food deserts; and
 - Fuel poverty.
- 3.1.3 These indicators have been identified in discussion with Council officers as the most relevant to understanding the socio-economic diversity of West Berkshire's population as it relates to the geography of the district, as well as offering strong insights into the roots of hidden inequalities issues. As those with particular protected characteristics may experience these indicators differently, these datasets will be used to highlight pinch points where West Berkshire might be more vulnerable to equalities challenges.
- 3.1.4 All the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act are included in this baseline. They will be described in the following order:
- Age;
 - Sex;
 - Race;
 - Religion and belief;
 - Disability;
 - Pregnancy and maternity;
 - Sexual orientation;

¹ Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2010. Equality Act 2010. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

- Gender reassignment; and
- Marriage and civil partnership.

3.1.5 The baseline also includes the following groups:

- At-risk children, youth and young people;
- Those who are homeless;
- Carers;
- The Armed Forces community; and
- Those in the racing community.

3.1.6 These four groups are not included within the defined protected characteristics but are often highlighted as ‘other relevant groups’ in EDI policy. People who fall under these categories may be sensitive to equalities issues, particularly if they also possess a protected characteristic, and their presence within the district may have implications for the provision of Council services and the execution of the Public Sector Equality Duty (see **Section 4**).

3.2 Data Sources and Limitations

3.2.1 Much of the information forming the baseline assessment has been sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the UK Census. Wherever possible, the most recently available was used, ideally from ONS mid-2022 estimates, the 2021/2022 APS, or the Census 2021.

3.2.2 Notably however, for the Census 2021, most recent versions of many relevant datasets have not yet been released. Where 2021 datasets are not publicly accessible, Census 2011 data has been used instead. We have made recommendations throughout the baseline of where the Council should be particularly aware of upcoming data releases from the Census 2021.

3.2.3 Where other datasets are not available or do not exist, particularly around marginalised or at-risk communities, the baseline has been supplemented by conversations with relevant community members, representatives, or other spokespeople. These conversations will be clearly marked throughout the baseline as they appear and the links between the spokesperson and the community explained. In the forecasting section we discuss recommendations around qualitative and quantitative research that could be undertaken to improve knowledge of these communities.

3.2.4 In addition, where possible, the baseline features geographic comparators, including the South East and England, which will help to contextualise the West Berkshire baseline. These comparators will also help to highlight those key

trends, opportunities, challenges and target demographics which are borne out of initial analyses of the baseline.

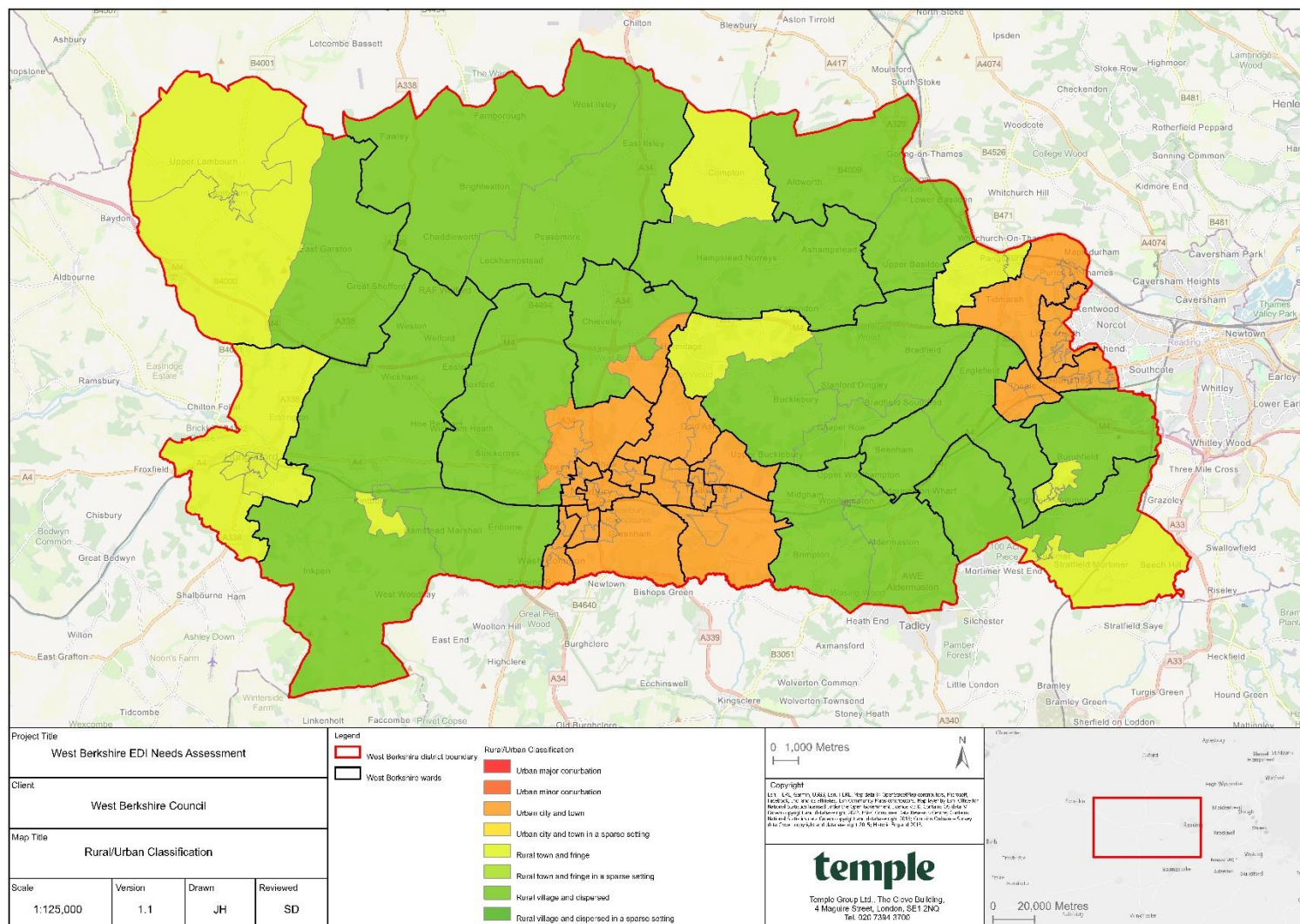
3.3 Geographic Indicators

- 3.3.1 The follow sections discuss datasets and information which will help to contextualise West Berkshire and uncover those issues that may be overlooked in only mapping those with protected characteristics or in other relevant groups. In particular, this discussion of West Berkshire’s geography will highlight the differences between West Berkshire’s urban and rural populations, unequal access to social and community infrastructure, and varied urban morphologies.
- 3.3.2 These datasets have been selected as they highlight some of the nuances of EDI issues across West Berkshire, as well as demonstrating trends that might be overlooked in assessing the district as a whole. Although West Berkshire’s population may appear to fall in line with the ‘average’ for England, there are pockets of inequality which require closer scrutiny.

3.4 District Infrastructure

- 3.4.1 West Berkshire is generally very rural, dominated by the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the north and west. As illustrated in **Figure A**, some semi-urban clusters are distributed across the southern and eastern portions of the district.

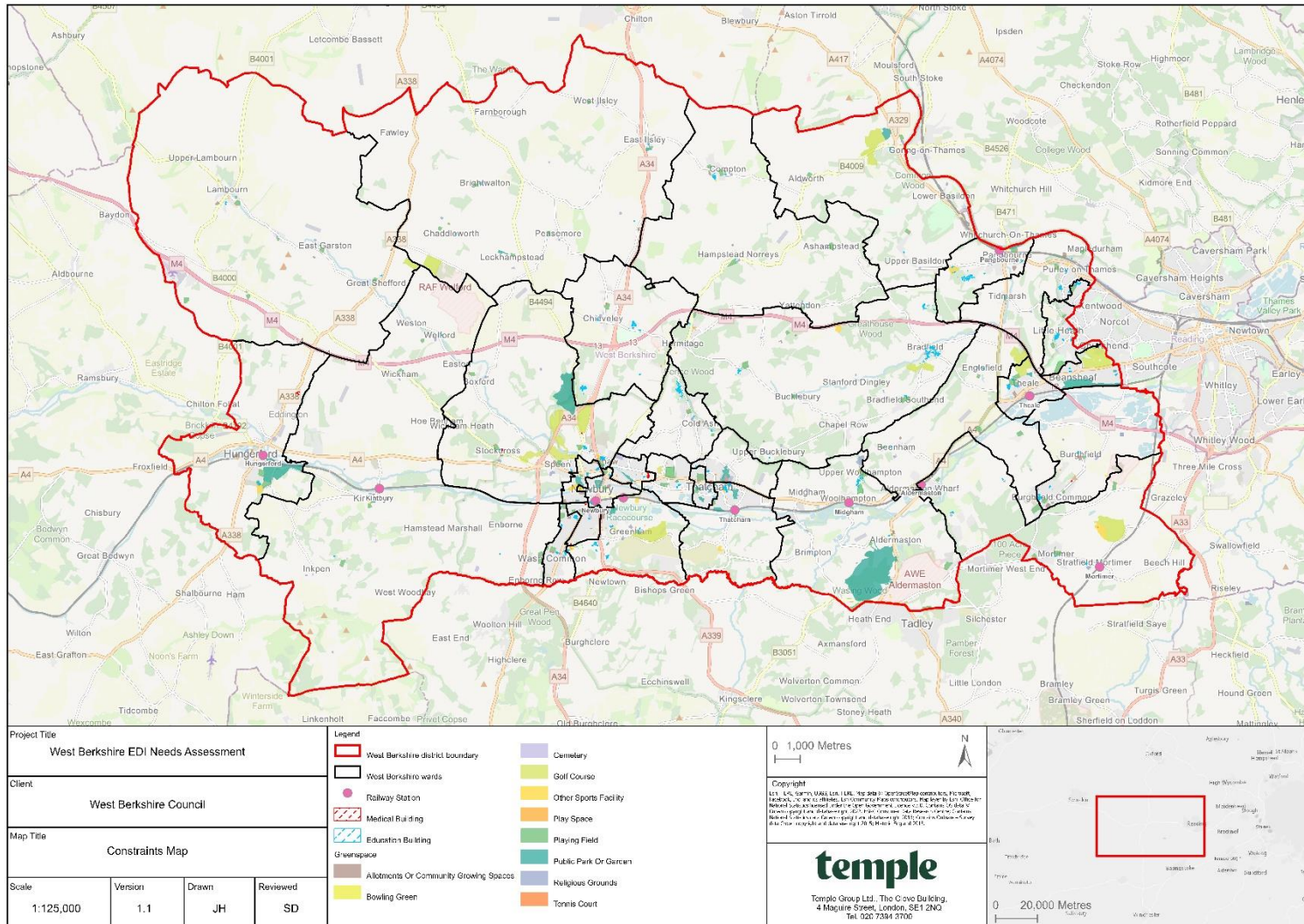
Figure A – Rurality across West Berkshire



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2018

- 3.4.2 As illustrated in **Figure B**, public and private infrastructure, facilities and services are generally concentrated in the belt linking these two main semi-urban areas.
- 3.4.3 The rural nature of the eastern and northern parts of West Berkshire is important as rurality poses a number of challenges in terms of EDI. The most obvious challenge is the location of services. As people are so dispersed, so too are healthcare facilities, schools, food and other retail stores, and other public and private sector resources and amenities.
- 3.4.4 While a robust infrastructure and transport system would help to connect rural residents with necessary services, it is often difficult to construct these systems in such areas due to geographical constraints including the presence of hilly terrain or protected lands, like an AONB. It is also expensive to construct such systems and when the cost per person is higher, as is the case in more rural areas, it can be difficult to execute such needed development in a timely manner.

Figure B – Infrastructure across West Berkshire



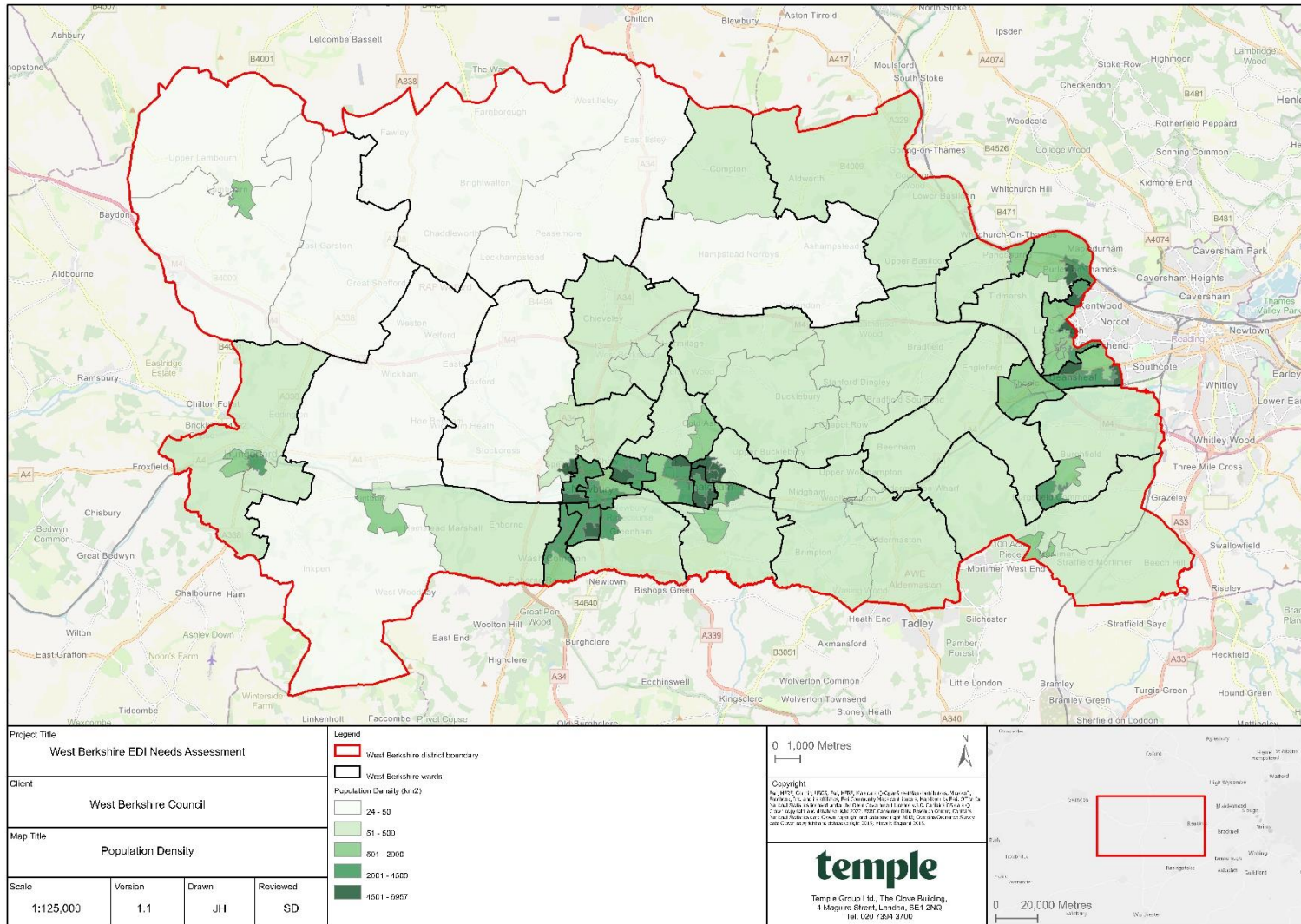
Source: West Berkshire Council, 2022

3.5 Population Density

3.5.1 West Berkshire’s population is well distributed across the district, with only 225 people per hectare². Nearly two thirds of the population live in the district’s main urban centres at Newbury (28%) and Thatcham (16%) and in the Reading suburbs (20%). More than a third of residents (36%) live in the substantial rural areas and small settlements comprising the rest of the district. This distribution is depicted in **Figure C** below, with darker areas representing areas with higher population density.

² West Berkshire Council, 2021. Your District: Facts and Figures. Available at: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/research#:~:text=West%20Berkshire%20has%20one%20of,with%20225%20people%20per%20hectare>.

Figure C – Population Density across West Berkshire



Source: West Berkshire Council, 2021

3.6 Urban Morphology and Land Uses

Neighbourhood Typologies

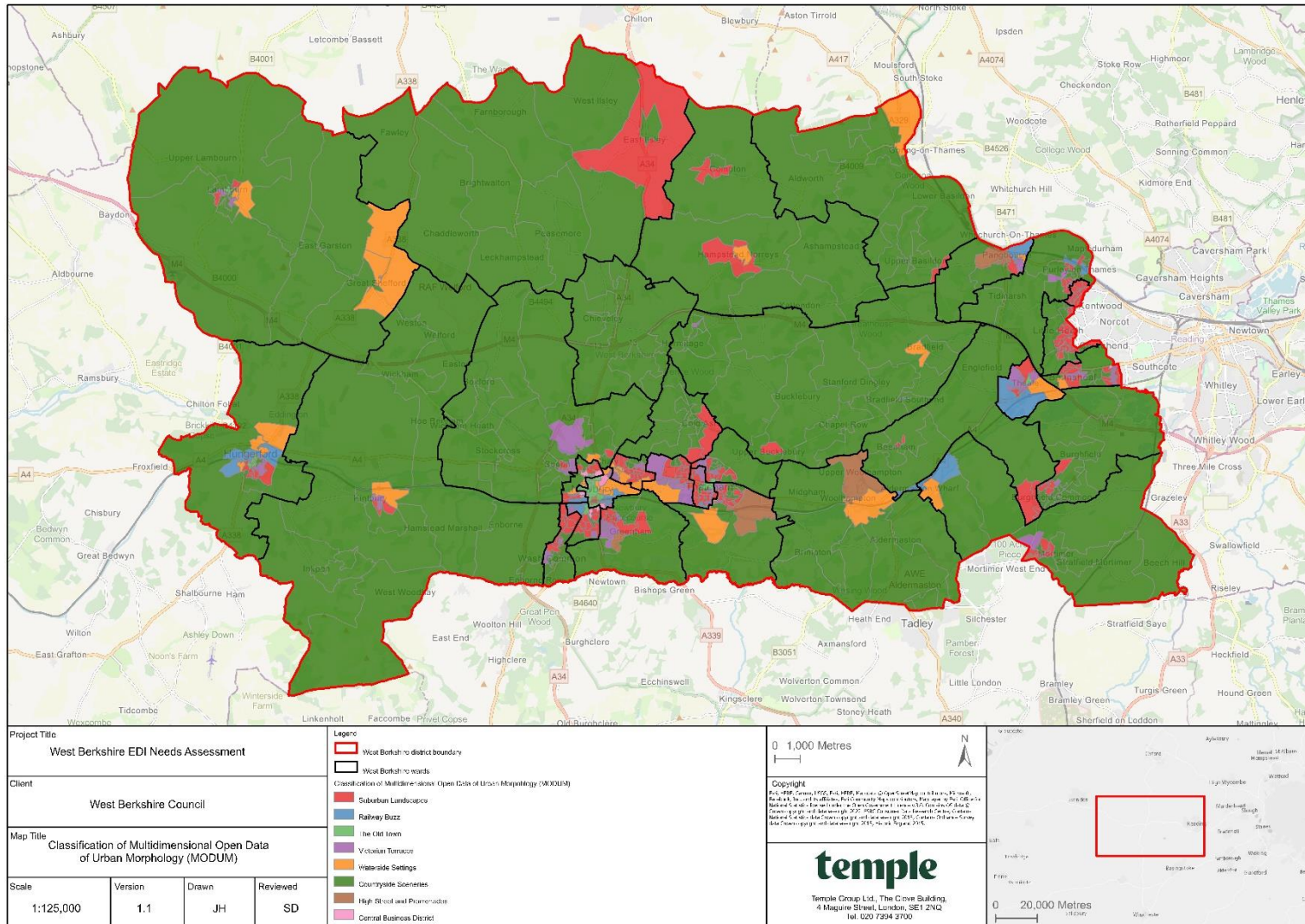
- 3.6.1 To provide an overview of the neighbourhood types within West Berkshire and their prevalence, we have used the Classification of Multidimensional Open Data of Urban Morphology (MODUM)³ from the Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC). MODUM collates open data on features of the built environment to create typologies categorising neighbourhoods based on these features. Typologies are based on a number of physical attributes such as street and railway networks, green spaces, retail facilities and historic buildings.
- 3.6.2 **Countryside Sceneries** are, by far, the most common neighbourhood typology found in West Berkshire. Countryside Sceneries are found in or near open countryside and are dotted with primarily detached houses. Most rural villages are classed as Countryside Sceneries, as are some city fringe developments at the very edge of urban and suburban development.
- 3.6.3 West Berkshire also has a significant proportion of **Suburban Landscapes** and **Waterside Settings**, which dispersed among these Countryside Sceneries and are less rural but not yet truly urban. Suburban Landscapes are generally residential areas comprised of semi-detached houses in cul-de-sacs or other organised developments, near schools and parks, and far from town centres. Waterside Settings are defined by their proximity to aquatic features such as rivers, canals or the sea, although in the case of West Berkshire only inland water sources are present. These neighbourhoods are comprised of a wider range of uses such as villages, ports, industrial or post-industrial sites, and large infrastructure.
- 3.6.4 West Berkshire's more urban areas are comprised of **High Streets and Promenades, Old Towns** and some **Central Business Districts**. High Streets and Promenades are easily distinguishable areas representing the main commercial and retail centres of urban development, and they are often comprised of pedestrianised street networks. Old Towns are the traditional town centre and are usually located near to the main high street. These relatively low-density areas are defined by the presence of a large number of registered buildings, recreational facilities, administrative buildings and historical features. Although less common than High Streets and Promenades, and Old Towns, West Berkshire does have some Central Business Districts. Also known as city centres, these neighbourhoods are primarily comprised of high-

³ Alexandros, A., et al., 2016. A Classification of Multidimensional Open Data of Urban Morphology. *Built Environment*, Volume 42, Number 3, Autumn 2016, pp. 382-395(14). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2148/benv.42.3.382>.

rise commercial and office spaces and tend to have good access to amenities and transport routes.

- 3.6.5 Finally, **Victorian Terraces** and **Railway Buzz** neighbourhoods make up the remaining neighbourhood typologies in West Berkshire. These areas tend to be on the outskirts of urban development and are dominated by Victorian-era terraced housing, in the case of the Victorian Terraces, and rail-centric infrastructure including stations and tracks, in the case of the Railway Buzz, although they have no other major distinguishing characteristics.
- 3.6.6 This data is illustrated in **Figure D** and should be considered in conjunction with **Figure A**, **Figure B** and **Figure C**, as these datasets all highlight the urban-rural split across West Berkshire. The built environment and urban settings have a powerful impact on numerous equalities issues, greatly affecting access to educational, economic, health and other resources and associated opportunities.

Figure D – Neighbourhood Typologies across West Berkshire



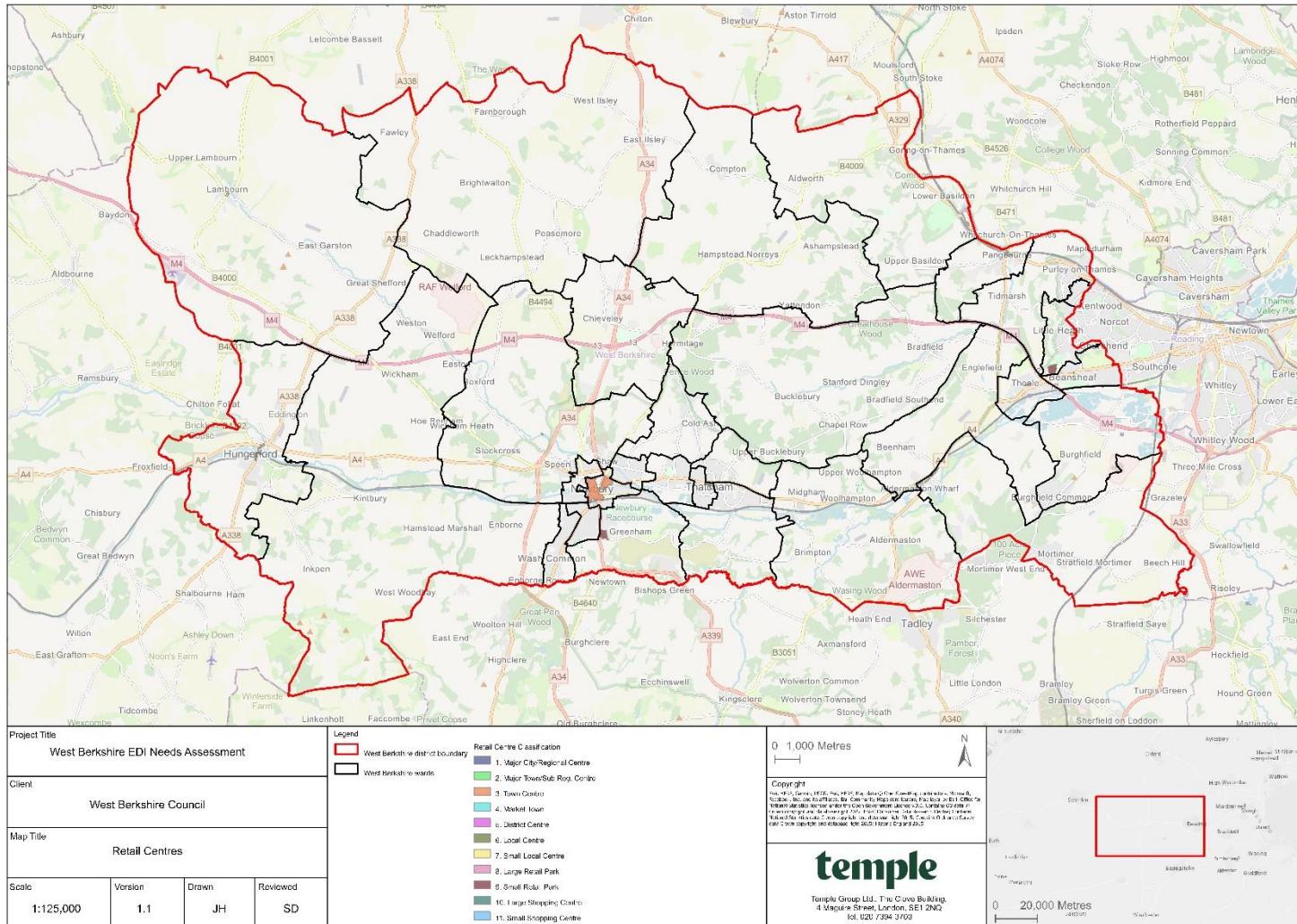
Source: CDRC, 2022

Retail Centres

- 3.6.7 The CDRC Retail Centre Boundaries are a hierarchical classification based on location, retail count, density, and function, and are intended to identify the prominence of retail centres within a given area⁴. The eleven retail centre types as defined by the CDRC include major city / regional centres, major town / subregional centres, town centres, market towns, district centres, local centres, small local centres, large retail parks, small retail parks, large shopping centres and small shopping centres.
- 3.6.8 Based on the CDRC's classifications, major retail centres in West Berkshire are generally linked to urban or semi-urban centres including Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford, Lambourn, Theale, Pangbourne and the Reading suburbs, as depicted in **Figure E** below. The locations of these retail centres and areas of higher population density align with the location of relevant MODUM neighbourhood typologies including High Streets and Promenades, Old Towns, Central Business Districts, Suburban Landscapes and Railway Buzz.

⁴ Consumer Data Research Centre, 2022. Retail Centre Boundaries and Open Indicators. Available at: <https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/retail-centre-boundaries-and-open-indicators>.

Figure E – Retail Centres across West Berkshire



Source: CDRC, 2022

Unused Land

- 3.6.9 While West Berkshire does not feature a great deal of brownfield land, the Brownfield Land Register does feature some large brownfield sites which are potentially suitable for residential development in and around Newbury and Compton⁵. England does not currently provide data on the prevalence of vacant and derelict land in the country.

3.7 Socio-Economic Indicators

- 3.7.1 The follow section highlights socio-economic data that elucidates the implications of the geographic indicators described above, as well as providing greater context for the issues to which some demographics will be more vulnerable. The datasets below have been selected as most relevant to this needs assessment as they utilise national data sources to highlight the various factors that may affect equalities outcomes.

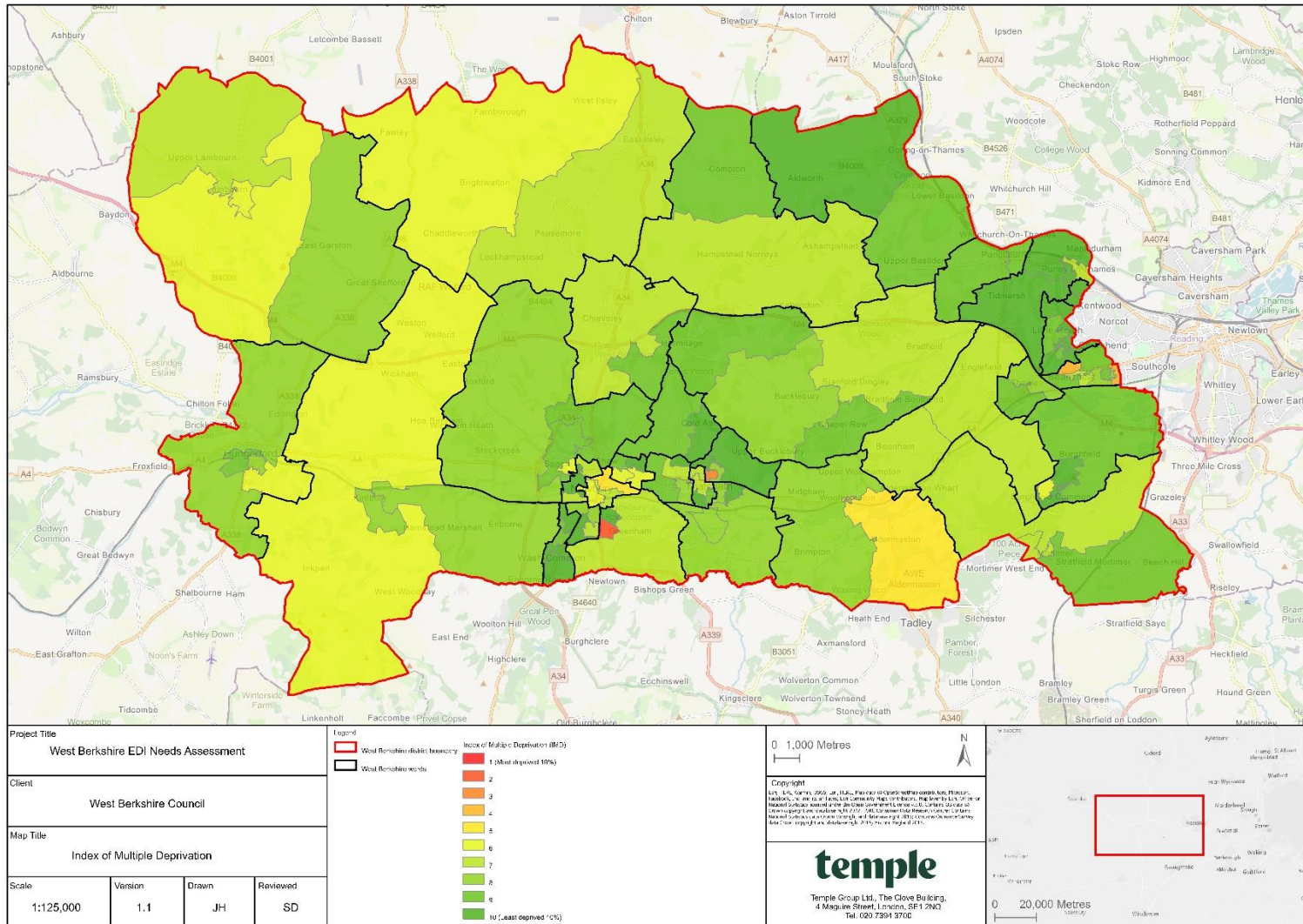
3.8 Deprivation

- 3.8.1 The English Indices of Deprivation 2019⁶ (EID 2019) is the official measure of deprivation in England and provides a useful illustration of relative inequality within local authorities. The EID 2019 is based on seven distinct domains of deprivation: income, employment, education and skills training, health deprivation and disability, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment, which are combined and weighted to form the overall index. Individuals living in areas of higher deprivation are more likely to experience inequalities based on the various domains which contribute to this deprivation.
- 3.8.2 As a whole, West Berkshire’s Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which are the smallest geographic areas assessed in the EID 2019, do not show significant signs of deprivation, with the vast majority scoring in the 6th to 10th decile for overall deprivation. This places these 91 LSOAs amongst the 50% *least* deprived LSOAs in the country.
- 3.8.3 However, West Berkshire does have six LSOAs scoring in the 1st to 5th deciles, or amongst the 50% *most* deprived in the country. These LSOAs are generally clustered in and around the district’s more urban areas, including Newbury and Thatcham in the south, the Reading suburbs in the east, and Aldermaston in the southeast, as depicted in the amber and red areas on **Figure F** below.

⁵ West Berkshire Council, 2019. Brownfield Land Register. Available at: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/brownfieldlandregister>.

⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019. English Indices of Deprivation 2019. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

Figure F – Deprivation across West Berkshire (overall EID 2019 score by decile)



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019

3.8.4 Although West Berkshire as a whole does not see high rates of deprivation, these six LSOA which are amongst the 50% most deprived in the country are more at risk of equalities-related issues based on their scores in each of the domains of deprivation. The individual scores for each domain of deprivation for West Berkshire's most deprived LSOAs are included in **Table 3.1** below.

Newbury and Thatcham

3.8.5 In Newbury, LSOAs West Berkshire 019B (Newbury Clay Hill ward) and West Berkshire 020B (Newbury Greenham ward) are ranked in the 5th and 2nd deciles for overall deprivation respectively. West Berkshire 020B faces particular deprivation as it is amongst the 20% most deprived LSOAs in England and scores particularly poorly in the domains of income (2nd decile), employment (2nd decile) and education and skills training (1st decile).

3.8.6 In Thatcham, West Berkshire 016E (Thatcham North East ward) is ranked in the 3rd decile for overall deprivation. It also scores particularly poorly in the domains of income (3rd decile), employment (3rd decile) and education and skills training (2nd decile).

Reading Suburbs

3.8.7 Near Reading, West Berkshire 006E (Tilehurst Birch Copse ward) and West Berkshire 008A (Tilehurst South & Holybrook ward) are both ranked in the 4th decile for overall deprivation. West Berkshire 006E scores particularly poorly in the domains of income (3rd decile), employment (3rd decile) and education and skills training (2nd decile). West Berkshire 008A scores particularly poorly in the domains of education and skills training (3rd decile) and barriers to housing and services (1st decile).

Aldermaston

3.8.8 Around Aldermaston, West Berkshire 011A (Aldermaston ward), is ranked in the 5th decile for overall deprivation. It scores particularly poorly in the domains of barriers to housing and services (1st decile) and living environment (2nd decile).

Table 3.1 – Domains of Deprivation in at-risk LSOAs (overall EID 2019 score and individual domain scores by decile)

	Overall	Income	Employment	Education and Skills Training	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime	Barriers to Housing and Services	Living Environment
West Berkshire 019B	5	4	4	4	7	5	7	4
West Berkshire 020B	2	2	2	1	4	4	6	9
West Berkshire 016E	3	3	3	2	4	5	5	8
West Berkshire 006E	4	3	3	2	4	5	9	9
West Berkshire 008A	4	5	4	3	6	6	1	10
West Berkshire 011A	5	5	7	6	7	9	1	2



← More deprived

Less deprived →

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019

3.9 Digital Exclusion

- 3.9.1 The Internet User Classification (IUC) describes how people interact with the internet in the UK, as well as common reasons for this behaviour based on national trends⁷. It is a useful tool to consider when assessing inequalities as it provides more detail about how people interact with the internet based on location, age and various socio-economic indicators⁸.
- 3.9.2 **e-Rational Utilitarians** (40%) is the most common IUC in West Berkshire. These users tend to be more prevalent in rural areas and use the internet to access service applications, such as online grocery shopping or banking, rather than for entertainment or communication. This may be due to these areas having constrained internet speeds which limits the functionality of websites requiring faster connections.
- 3.9.3 The next most common IUC in West Berkshire is the **e-Veteran** (29.6%). These users tend to accumulate around cities and in suburbs, and are a more mature, affluent and engaged population of users. They generally use a range of devices in a variety of ways, particularly for information seeking and online services.
- 3.9.4 **e-Mainstream Users** (16.3%) are the next most prevalent class in West Berkshire. These users are usually found in heterogenous neighbourhoods at the periphery of urban areas, represent a wide range of socio-economic groups and exhibit average internet usage characteristics.
- 3.9.5 West Berkshire also contains a small proportion of **Passive and Uncommitted Users** (6.7%) and **Digital Seniors** (5.2%). Passive and Uncommitted Users generally reside in suburban or semi-rural areas, tend to hold semi-skilled or blue-collar jobs, and have limited to no interaction with the internet. This lack of interaction is likely because access to broadband is limited and not a requirement of professional life. Digital Seniors also generally reside in semi-rural areas, although they tend to be retired and relatively affluent, and rarely use the internet, though they may use it for information seeking and financial or other services applications. Again, this lack of interaction is likely because access to broadband is limited and not a requirement of professional life.
- 3.9.6 The least represented IUCs in the district are **e-Professionals** (0.7%), **Youthful Urban Fringe** (0.7%) and **Settled Offline Communities** (0.7%). E-Professionals are largely young, urban professionals with significant experience interacting

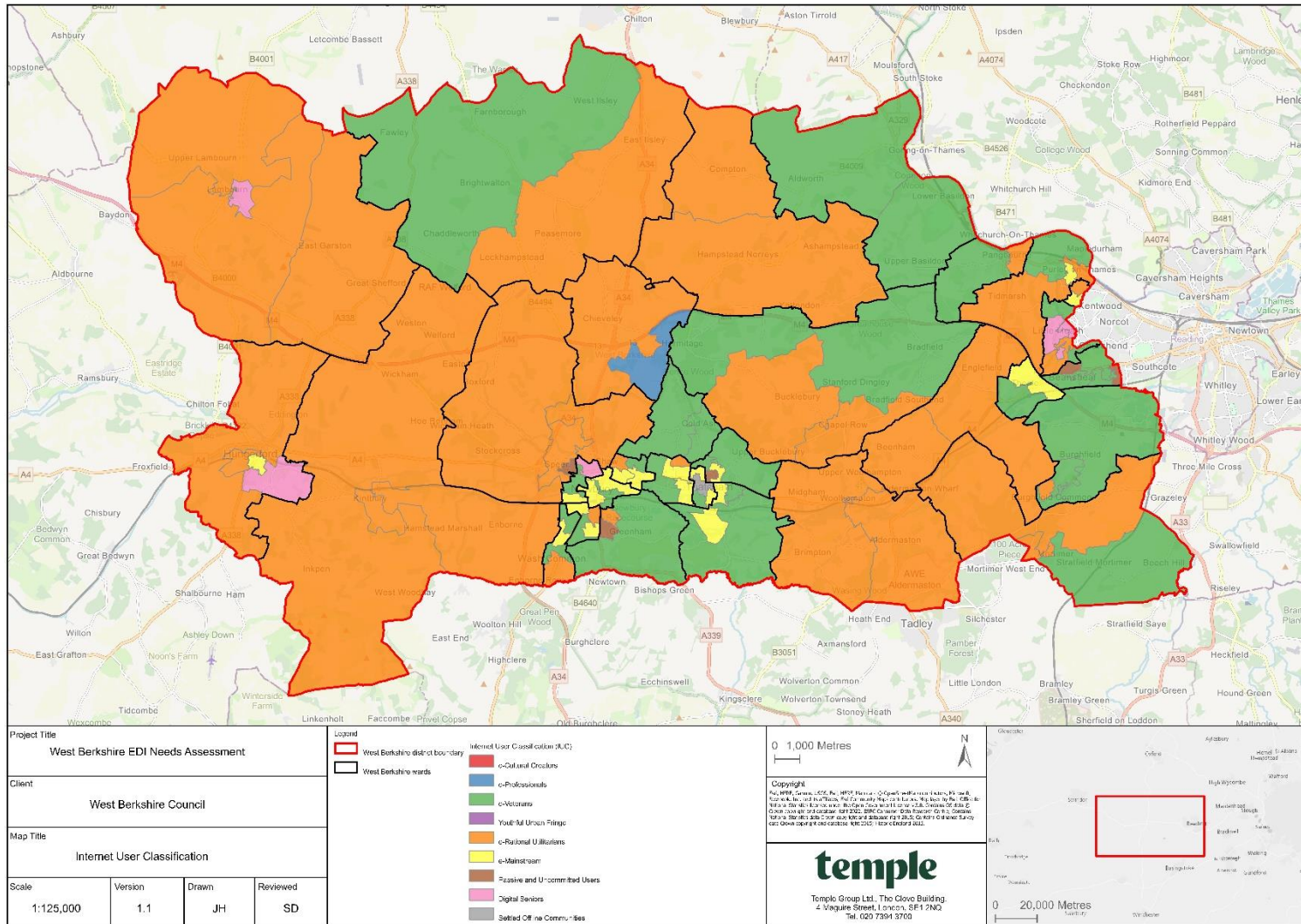
⁷ Consumer Data Research Centre, 2022. Internet User Classification. Available at: <https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/internet-user-classification>.

⁸ Singleton, A., et al., 2020. Mapping the geodemographics of digital inequality in Great Britain: An integration of machine learning into small area estimation. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, Volume 82, July 2020. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compenurbsys.2020.101486>.

with the internet in a variety of settings and for a variety of tasks. The low prevalence of this user class in West Berkshire may be attributed to the corresponding dip in population size amongst people in their early- to mid-20s, as West Berkshire has a relatively small proportion of people in this age bracket (see **Figure I**).

- 3.9.7 Youthful Urban Fringe users often reside at the edge of materially deprived, urban communities and tend to use the internet for social media, although their overall engagement is average. The low prevalence of this user class in West Berkshire may be attributed to the corresponding lack of urban centres.
- 3.9.8 Finally, Settled Offline Communities tend to be comprised of older, retired people living in semi-rural areas who rarely engage with the internet except for information seeking and limited online shopping. This lack of engagement may be largely contributed to rare or even no internet access.
- 3.9.9 The clustering of IUCs across West Berkshire helps to illustrate the implications of West Berkshire's urban-rural split and provides possible reasons for why different communities interact with the internet differently. Rural areas, in West Berkshire and across the country, are not just categorised by geographic or physical indicators such as population density, infrastructure or architecture. They also demonstrate socio-economic trends which can have adverse implications in terms of equal access to vital services and opportunity.
- 3.9.10 A map illustrating the geographic dispersion of these IUCs is included in **Figure G** below, highlighting the clustering of various IUCs in different geographic areas across the district.

Figure G – Internet User Classifications across West Berkshire



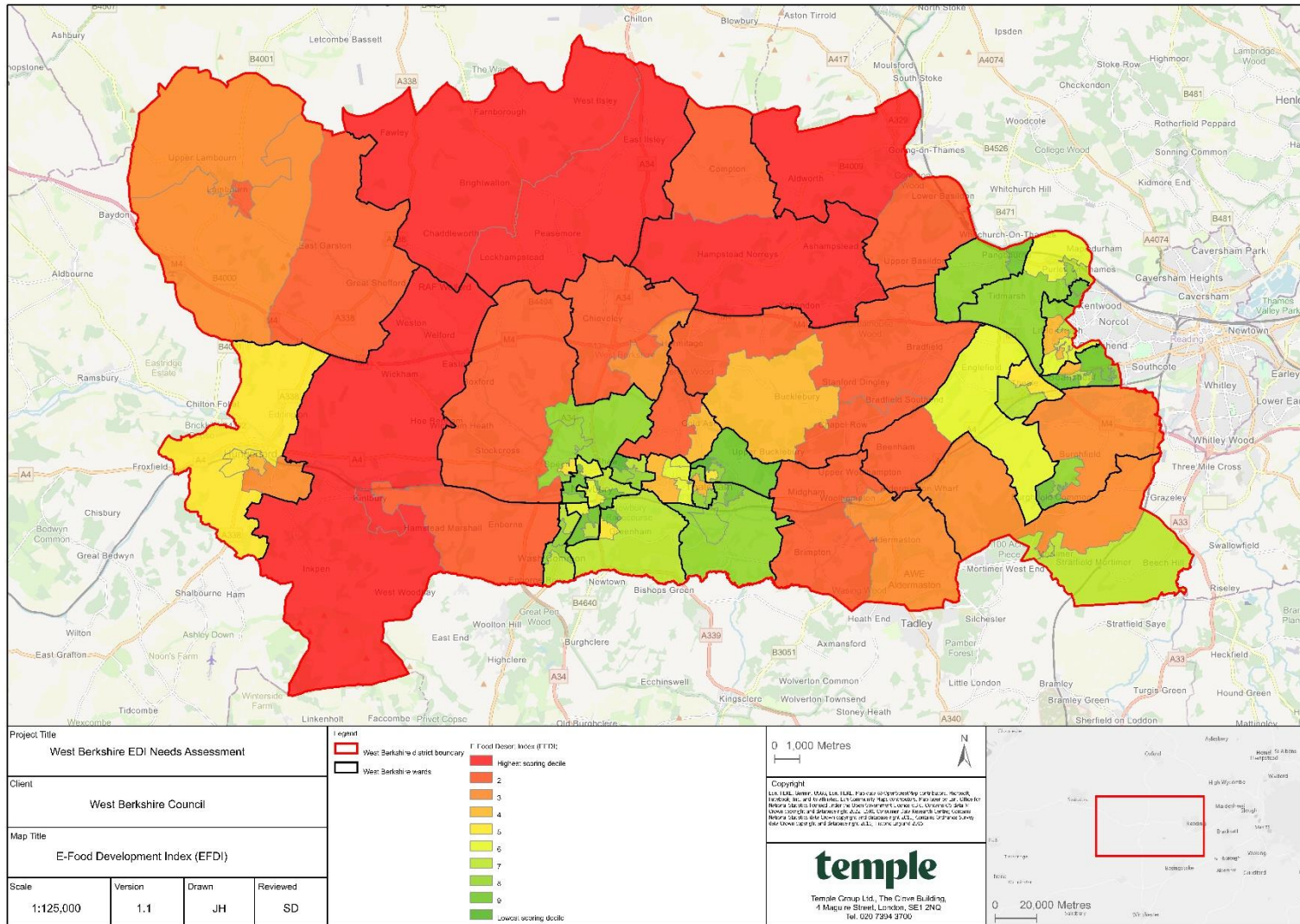
Source: CDRC, 2022

3.10 Food Deserts

- 3.10.1 Food deserts are defined as areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food. They tend to be inhabited by residents in lower income brackets with poor access to transportation, which make them less desirable to major supermarket chains that would supply fresh, whole foods. This often results in a concentration of fast-food takeaways and other convenience food outlets, which in turn can contribute to poor health outcomes such as obesity and diabetes.
- 3.10.2 The e-Food Desert Index (EFDI) measures the extent to which neighbourhoods exhibit those characteristics associated with food deserts including: 1) proximity and density of grocery retail facilities, 2) transport and accessibility, 3) neighbourhood socio-economic and demographic characteristics, and 4) e-commerce availability and propensity⁹.
- 3.10.3 In West Berkshire, food deserts are more prevalent in more rural areas of the district, which corresponds with the relative lack of retail facilities, infrequent public transportation and limited internet access. Conversely, food deserts are less prevalent in and around urban centres like Newbury, Thatcham and Reading where there are more retail facilities, more comprehensive public transport routes and greater internet use.
- 3.10.4 The prevalence of food deserts across West Berkshire again illustrates the divide between those occupying urban and rural areas, further demonstrating the broader challenges facing those living in different areas within the district.
- 3.10.5 Although this data reinforces broader issues around rural access, it is important to keep in mind that there are many complex factors beyond the scope of this report that can affect individual equalities outcomes such as income, access to private transport and overall health indicators.
- 3.10.6 **Figure H** below shows the prevalence of food deserts across West Berkshire, with areas shown in amber and red having more food deserts.

⁹ Consumer Data Research Centre, 2022. E-food Desert Index. Available at: <https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/e-food-desert-index>.

Figure H – Food Deserts across West Berkshire



Source: CDRC, 2022

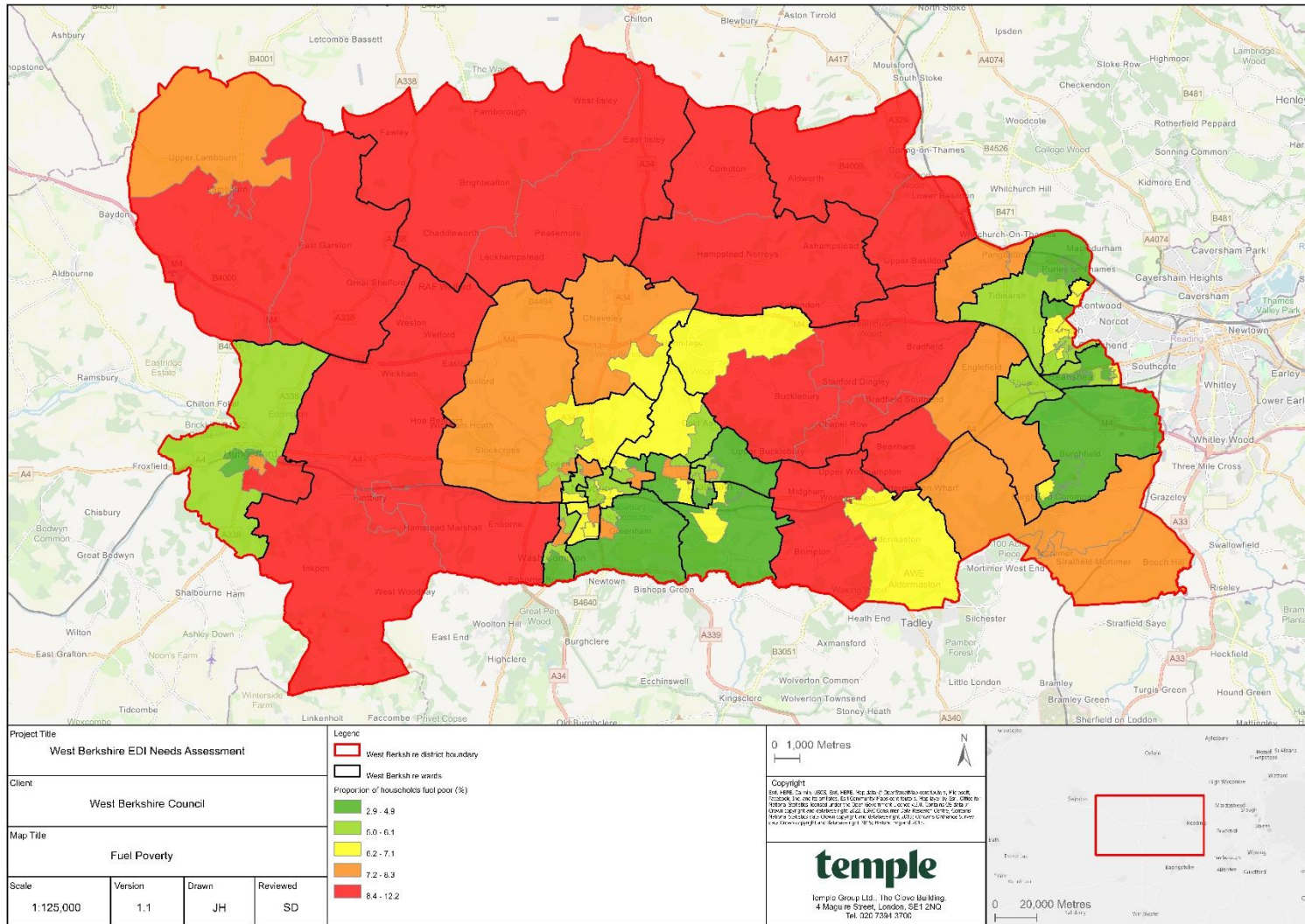
3.11 Fuel Poverty

- 3.11.1 Fuel poverty is determined using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator which considers household income, household energy requirements and fuel prices¹⁰. A household is defined as fuel poor if: 1) the household occupies a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or lower and 2) if spending the minimum required to heat the home leaves the household with a residual income which is below the poverty line.
- 3.11.2 Generally, West Berkshire has fewer households experiencing fuel poverty (6.6%) than both the South East (7.9%) and England (10.3%)¹¹. As was the case regarding overall deprivation, digital exclusion and food deserts, households that are more likely to experience fuel poverty tend to be distributed across more rural areas in the district while households that are less likely to experience fuel poverty are in more urban areas.
- 3.11.3 This data is particularly pertinent now as the UK is currently facing rapidly rising fuel costs and a cost-of-living crisis. As fuel, and other necessities, become more expensive, the gap between those experiencing fuel poverty and not will likely continue to grow and the Council may need to offer additional support to those struggling most.
- 3.11.4 That said, as above, although this data reinforces broader issues around rural access, it is important to keep in mind that there are many complex factors beyond the scope of this report that can affect individual equalities outcomes such as income, access to private transport and overall health indicators.
- 3.11.5 **Figure I** below shows the distribution across West Berkshire of households facing fuel poverty. The areas shown in amber and red have the highest proportions of fuel poor households.

¹⁰ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2022. Fuel poverty statistics. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>.

¹¹ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020. Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2020. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2020>.

Figure I – Households Experiencing Fuel Poverty (%)



Source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020

3.12 Protected Characteristics

3.12.1 This section outlines key data regarding the core protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act, as well as additional commentary on the implications of these figures.

Age

3.12.2 Overall, the age distribution of West Berkshire’s population is consistent with trends seen across the South East and England, with most residents between 15 and 64 years of age (62.7%), and the rest closely split between children aged 14 and younger (17.17%) and older people aged 65 and older (19.6%).

Table 3.2 – Population by Age (under 15 years, 15 – 64 years, over 64 years)

	West Berkshire		South East		England	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
Under 15 years	28,600	17.7	1,616,500	17.4	9,838,700	17.4
15 – 64 years	101,200	62.7	5,857,300	63.1	36,249,800	64.2
Over 64 years	31,600	19.6	1,804,300	19.4	10,401,200	18.4

Source: ONS, Census 2021

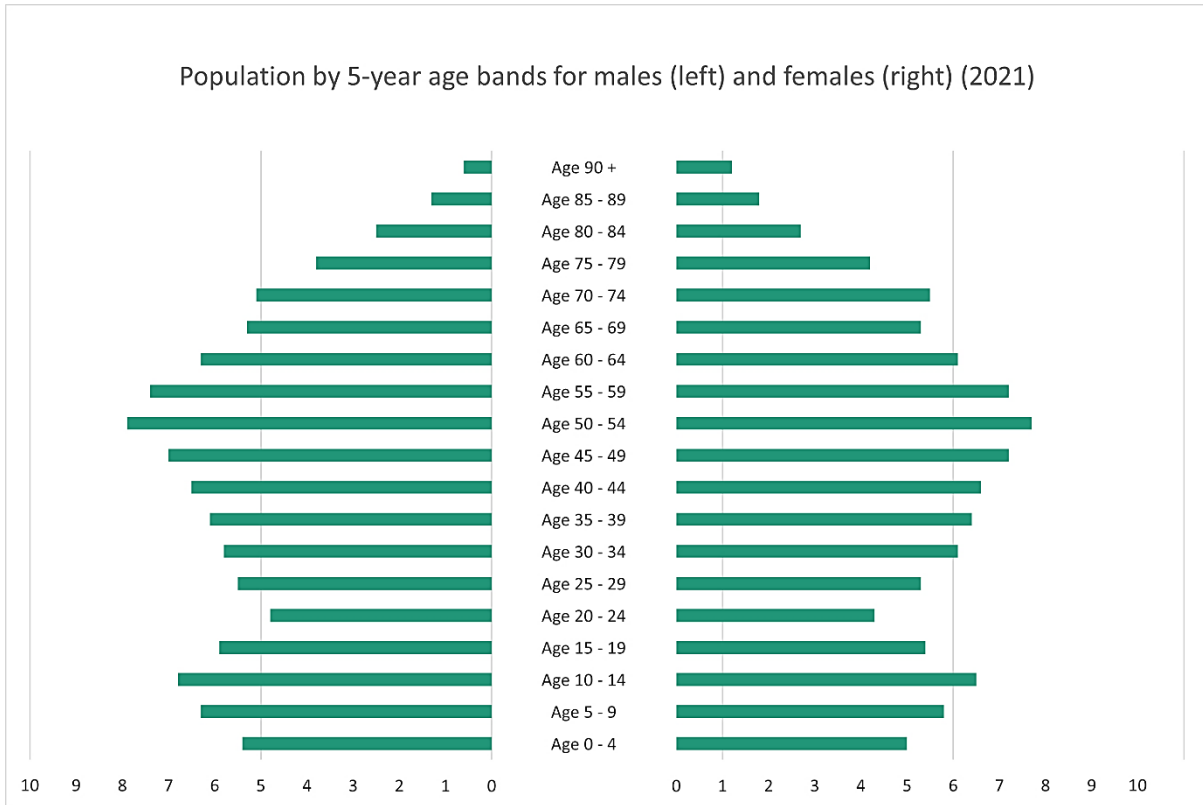
3.12.3 Generally, population distribution based on age is expected to follow a bell curve, with fewer residents occupying the age brackets at either end of the spectrum. A bell curve that shows more younger people indicates a growing population, while a curve showing more older people indicates an ageing population.

3.12.4 In West Berkshire, the population follows a largely recognisable bell curve shape, with a larger younger population indicating overall growth. One significant deviation from the standard bell curve is the significant dip in population size between the 10 to 14 year and 20 to 24 year age bracket. From the 25 to 29 year age bracket the population size steadily increases again before falling as expected as the population ages. The lack of universities in the area is the most likely explanation for this dip, as 17 to 24 year olds pursue higher education and take graduate jobs in other areas, before returning to West Berkshire in their late 20s to raise families.

3.12.5 It is important to consider the various age groups present within West Berkshire as different age groups have different needs and therefore different relationships to EDI issues. For example, children and young people will be

more directly impacted by access to education, working age adults will be more susceptible to changes in regional employment opportunities, and older people will be more reliant on healthcare services.

Figure J - Population by Age (overall distribution, males and females)



Source: ONS, Census 2021

Sex

3.12.6 West Berkshire’s population is evenly divided between females (50.6%) and males (49.4%), and this split is consistent with distributions of the sexes across both the South East and England more broadly. As there is no disproportionality between male and female populations, limited inferences can be made about their implications. According to ONS 2020 data there is also no significant difference among the majority of LSOAs in terms of the ratio of females to males.

Table 3.3 – Population by Sex

	West Berkshire		South East		England	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
All persons	161,400		9,278,100		56,489,800	
Females	81,700	50.6	4,738,800	51.1	28,833,500	51.0
Males	79,700	49.4	4,539,300	48.9	27,656,300	49.0

Source: ONS, Census 2021

- 3.12.7 Looking at the distribution of females and males across various age brackets, it is apparent that West Berkshire’s female population is generally older than its male population. 20.7% of the female population is 65 years and older while only 18.6% of the male population is 65 and older¹². This trend continues with age, with 5.7% of the female population aged 80 years and older and only 4.4% of the male population aged 80 years and older. This is consistent with trends across England, as 19.6% of the national female population is 65 years and older and 5.8% is 80 years and older, while only 17.3% of the national male population is 65 years and older and 4.2% is 80 years and older.
- 3.12.8 This discrepancy is important to note as women tend to live longer than men and older people are likely to face greater health challenges, indicating that the Council may need to address individual elements of aging populations in different ways. More information regarding the context and implications of these statistics should be addressed in the health-related needs assessment being conducted in parallel to this work.

Race

- 3.12.9 West Berkshire is not a particularly ethnically diverse area, with most residents identifying as White (94.8%) rather than as a non-White ethnic minority (5.2%). This is both less ethnically diverse than across the South East (90.7% White) and across the whole of England (85.4% White).
- 3.12.10 Of the West Berkshire residents who identify as a non-White ethnic minority, most residents identify as Asian / Asian British (2.5%), Black / African /

¹² Office for National Statistics, 2022. Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwalescensus2021>.

Caribbean / Black British (0.9%) or mixed / part of multiple ethnic groups (1.6%). Only 0.2% identify as being part of another ethnic group. These figures are proportionally lower than across the South East and England.

Table 3.4 – Population by Ethnicity (White and non-White ethnic minority)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
White (%)	94.8	90.7	85.4
Asian / Asian British (%)	2.5	5.2	7.8
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (%)	0.9	1.6	3.5
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups (%)	1.6	1.9	2.3
Other ethnic group (%)	0.2	0.6	1.0

Source: ONS, Census 2011

- 3.12.11 Among the district’s White residents, it is worth taking a closer look at the sometimes overlooked and often hard-to-measure Gypsy, Traveller and Roma population. According to official Census records, Gypsies and Travellers make up only 0.1% of West Berkshire, which is consistent with rates across the South East and England, although they frequently represent “some of the most disadvantaged people in the country”.
- 3.12.12 Furthermore, it is often difficult to determine exact figures for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities for a variety of reasons. The most obvious reason for this is the historic persecution by both state and individuals, resulting in a continued distrust in the government and government bodies. Members of these communities have also traditionally led a nomadic lifestyle without a fixed address and, according to the Census 2011, about one quarter of Gypsies and Travellers still do not live in a fixed dwelling such as a house, flat, maisonette or apartment¹³.
- 3.12.13 Although little data is available regarding the prevalence of these communities within West Berkshire, conversations with Amanda Povey (Consultation and Engagement Officer at West Berkshire Council) suggest that they are generally

¹³ Women and Equalities Committee, 2019. Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html#content>.

found in rural areas and in the Lambourn Valley. Further research into the location and socio-economic status of community members would be useful to better assess their needs and community-specific challenges beyond the geographically-linked indicators described in **Sections 3.3 to 3.11**.

Table 3.5 – Population by Ethnicity (White and White ethnic minority)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
White British (%)	90.4	85.2	79.7
Gypsy / Traveller (%)	0.1	0.2	0.1
Irish (%)	0.8	0.9	1
Other White ethnic group (%)	3.5	4.4	4.6

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.12.14 West Berkshire also has a small but significant refugee community, primarily comprised of Ukrainians and Afghanis. According to Sam Shepherd (Local Communities Programme Manager at West Berkshire Council), as of early September 2022, there were roughly 300 adults and 200 children from Ukraine with asylum status in West Berkshire, as well as 70 adults and 110 children from Afghanistan occupying two local hotels.

3.12.15 These families face a range of issues including finding housing, registering with schools and GPs, applying for bank accounts, learning English and registering for relevant courses, and securing residency permits. They are also intensely vulnerable given the often-distressing circumstances of their arrival in England generally and the fragility of their legal status. It is therefore imperative that these communities are connected to a strong network of services as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Religion and Belief

3.12.16 The religious affiliation of West Berkshire’s population does not differ significantly from that of the Southeast or England. Most of the population has religion (66.2%) while only about a third has no religion or did not state a religion in the Census.

Table 3.6 – Population by Religion (religiosity)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Has religion (%)	66.2	65	68.1
Has no religion (%)	26.7	27.7	24.7
No religion stated (%)	7.2	7.4	7.2

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.12.17 In terms of those who do have religion in West Berkshire, the majority identify as Christian (63.6%), which is consistent across the rest of the South East (59.8%) and England (59.4%). The most common minority religion is Islam (0.8%), which is again consistent across the South East (2.3%) and England (5%). In West Berkshire, Islam is closely followed by Hinduism (0.7%), then Buddhism (0.3%), Sikhism (0.2%) and Judaism (0.1%). The remaining proportion of residents who have religion identify as having some other religion (0.4%).

Table 2.7 – Population by Religion (religious affiliation)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Christian (%)	63.6	59.8	59.4
Muslim (%)	0.8	2.3	5.0
Hindu (%)	0.7	1.1	1.5
Buddhist (%)	0.3	0.5	0.5
Sikh (%)	0.2	0.6	0.8
Jewish (%)	0.1	0.2	0.5
Other religion (%)	0.4	0.5	0.4

Source: ONS, Census 2011

Disability

3.12.18 Disabled people have a physical, psychological or learning impairment, which in turn often makes them inherently more vulnerable to EDI-related challenges.

The ONS provides a series of comprehensive datasets regarding the intersection of disability and education, employment, housing, wellbeing and loneliness, which highlight the frequent disparity between disabled and non-disabled people¹⁴. Some of the core challenges facing disabled people more than their non-disabled counterparts include, but are not limited to, long-term conditions such as cancer, obesity and diabetes, and the need for ongoing financial, physical and mental health support¹⁵.

3.12.19 According to Public Health England (PHE), 13.2% of West Berkshire residents report having a limiting long-term illness or disability, which is lower than the average across the South East (15.2%) and England (17.6%)¹⁶.

3.12.20 According to Census data, the proportion of residents having a long-term illness or disability, whether limiting or not, is much higher, affecting the majority of the population (95.3%). Fortunately, the percentage of people whose day-to-day activities are limited in some way by these traits is much lower, impacting only about 12.5% of residents. These figures are largely consistent across the South East and England, although West Berkshire’s residents are generally less impacted by life-limiting illnesses and disabilities.

Table 3.8 – Population by Disability

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Possessing a long-term illness or disability (%)	13.2	15.2	17.6
Day to day activities limited a lot (%)	5.1	6.4	7.8
Day to day activities limited a little (%)	7.4	8.2	8.8
Day to day activities not limited (%)	82.7	78.4	77.3

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.12.21 In terms of learning disabilities, children in West Berkshire are generally less likely to have a learning difficulty than their peers across the country, although

¹⁴ Office for National Statistics, 2021. Disability. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability>.

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics, 2022. Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2021. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitypaygapsintheuk/2021>.

¹⁶ Public Health England, 2022. Local Health. Available at: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/local-health/data#page/0/gid/1938133184/pat/6/par/E12000008/ati/402/are/E06000037/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>.

the district does see slightly higher rates of Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (1.6%) compared to the South East (1.1%) and England (1.3%). West Berkshire also has a higher proportion of children with Autism (33.5%) compared to the South East (19.3%) and England (18%).

Table 3.9 – Population by Learning Disability

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Children with learning difficulties known to schools (%)	18.0	31.4	34.4
Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties known to schools (%)	12.7	26.6	29.1
Children with Severe Learning Difficulties known to schools (%)	3.7	3.7	4.0
Children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties known to schools (%)	1.6	1.1	1.3
Children with Autism known to schools (%)	33.5	19.3	18.0
Adults with a learning disability receiving long-term local authority support (%)	3.8	3.3	3.5

Source: PHE, Learning Disability Profiles 2020

Pregnancy and Maternity

3.12.22 Overall, pregnant people in West Berkshire see good outcomes in regard to pregnancy and maternity figures. West Berkshire’s Total Fertility Rate (TFR) (1.78) is higher than that of the South East (1.7) and England (1.62), indicating that more people who conceive in West Berkshire successfully carry the baby to term. TFR is a better indicator of overall fertility trends than the number of live births as it accounts for the size and age structure of a female population, including viable childbearing years. In addition, West Berkshire generally has lower rates of stillbirths (2.6) than the South East (3.6) and England (4.1).

Table 3.10 – Fertility Rates

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	1.78	1.7	1.62
Stillbirth rate	2.6	3.6	4.1

Source: APS, 2021

3.12.23 It is also worth noting that children born in West Berkshire are likely to be healthier than those born across the South East and England, as mothers in West Berkshire are more likely to have early access to maternity care. In addition, mothers are less likely to be obese and smoke during early pregnancy, to smoke at the time of birth, and to have babies with a low birth weight.

Table 3.11 – Maternal and Natal Health

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Early access to maternity care (%)	65.7	**	57.8
Obesity in early pregnancy (%)	19.4	20.9	22.1
Smoking in early pregnancy (%)	11.1	11.3	12.8
Smoking at time of delivery (%)	6.2	9.0	9.6
Low birth weight of term babies (%)	2.2	2.6	2.9

Source: PHE, 2021

** Value not available.

3.12.24 More information regarding the implications of maternal health and other indicators, as well as the context and implications of the above statistics, should be addressed in the health-related needs assessment being conducted in parallel to this work.

Sexual Orientation

3.12.25 Sexual orientation is an ‘umbrella term’ used in the Annual Population Survey (APS) which broadly intends to capture sexual identity, attraction and behaviour

rather than specific, detailed trends and associated issues¹⁷. According to the APS, sexual orientation is useful as a tool to help identify one component of sexual orientation, especially in relation to EDI challenges such as disadvantage and discrimination, but should not be used to identify sexual attraction or behaviour.

- 3.12.26 While current, reliable datasets capturing sexual orientation within West Berkshire are not readily available, according to experimental research statistics from 2017 the vast majority of West Berkshire’s population appears to identify as heterosexual¹⁸. Per the 2020 APS, the same appears to hold true across England, however this figure has been steadily declining since questions about sexual identity, later sexual orientation, were first introduced to the APS in 2014¹⁹.
- 3.12.27 As sexual orientation continues to gain traction in the public sphere, not least because it is included as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, more comprehensive and up to date datasets will become available. For example, the Census 2021 includes questions regarding sexual identity and orientation, the results of which will be published later this year.

Gender Reassignment

- 3.12.28 Gender reassignment, much like sexual orientation, is difficult to track statistically because there are few reliable datasets available, especially at the local level. However, also like sexual orientation, gender reassignment is becoming more of a mainstream topic of discussion among both the public and public bodies.
- 3.12.29 As such, the Census 2021 also includes questions about gender reassignment, or those whose gender identity is different to the sex they were registered at birth²⁰. Although this data has not yet been published, it will help to provide a clearer picture of who may possess this characteristic and what broader EDI-related challenges they may face.

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics, 2022. Sexual identity. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality>.

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics, 2017. Subnational sexual identity estimates, UK: 2013 to 2015. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/articles/subnationalsexualidentityestimates/uk2013to2015#sexual-identity-local-authorities>.

¹⁹ Office for National Statistics, 2022. Sexual orientation, UK: 2020. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2020>.

²⁰ Office for National Statistics, 2022. Exploring existing data on gender identity and sexual orientation. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/genderidentity/exploringexistingdataongenderidentityandsexualorientation>.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

3.12.30 Generally, West Berkshire sees higher rates of marriage (54.1%) than the rest of the South East (49.3%) and England (46.6%), although rates of same-sex civil partnerships are broadly the same across all regions (0.2%). The district also sees marginally lower rates of divorce (8.8%) and legal separation (2.3%) than the South East (9.1% and 2.5%) and England (9% and 2.7%). These figures are in turn reflective of West Berkshire’s smaller single population (28.6%) compared the rest of region (31.9%) and the country (34.6%).

Table 3.12 – Population by Marital and Civil Partnership Status (aged 16+ years)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Married (%)	54.1	49.3	46.6
Same-sex civil partnership (%)	0.2	0.2	0.2
Divorced or in a now-dissolved same-sex civil partnership (%)	8.8	9.1	9
Separated (%)	2.3	2.5	2.7
Widowed or surviving partner is a same-sex civil partnership (%)	6	6	6.9
Single (%)	28.6	31.9	34.6

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.13 Other Relevant Groups

3.13.1 The following section examines other relevant demographic groups commonly associated with equalities considerations by local authorities due to vulnerable circumstances and other factors.

3.14 At-Risk Children, Youth and Young People

Educational Attainment

3.14.1 Among primary school students, pupils in West Berkshire perform at similar rates to pupils across England, with 64% meeting expected standards,

compared to 65% of all pupils in English schools²¹. Students are considered to be meeting the expected standard if they achieve a scaled score of 100 or more in their reading and maths tests, and their teacher assesses them as 'working at the expected standard' or better in writing.

- 3.14.2 Within this context, West Berkshire's 79 primary schools demonstrate a range of educational proficiencies. Based on 2019 data, the best performing schools are Enborne C.E. Primary School, the Ilsleys Primary School and Woolhampton C.E. Primary School, all of which have 100% of their pupils meeting the expected standard. However, there are also schools with much lower performance scores, including some in which 0% of pupils meet the expected standard.
- 3.14.3 Among secondary school students, the average Attainment 8 score for pupils across England for the 2020 to 2021 academic year was 50.9 out of 90²². In West Berkshire, for the 2018 to 2019 academic year, pupils across the district's 29 secondary schools scored an average of 47.7, slightly below the national standard. Attainment among female pupils (49.3) was slightly higher than among male pupils (46.1), which is a trend mirrored across the country. Likewise, students with Chinese ethnic backgrounds scored the highest (61.8) and students of unknown backgrounds scored the lowest (21.4), again mirroring national trends.
- 3.14.4 Based on discussions with Pamela Voss (EMTAS Team Lead at West Berkshire Council), we understand that in West Berkshire, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma students, as well as students from other ethnic minorities, are supported through the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Scheme (EMTAS). This scheme promotes cultural awareness in schools and among teachers and staff, as well as helping pupils and their families achieve educational milestones and navigate potentially emotive subjects and transitions.
- 3.14.5 West Berkshire also offers support to students with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Students in these programmes most commonly speak Polish, Portuguese and Romanian, as well as Indian languages such as Tamil, Urdu and Gujarati.

²¹ UK Government, 2022. Find and compare schools in England. Available at: https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/schools-by-type?for=primary&step=default&table=schools®ion=869&geographic=la&orderby=ks2.0.PTRWM_EXP&orderdir=asc.

²² Department for Education, 2022. GCSE results (Attainment 8). Available at: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/gcse-results-attainment-8-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest>.

Children in Care and Care Leavers

- 3.14.6 The UK government publishes a range of data sets describing children in care and care leavers at the national level based on statistics submitted by local authorities. However, these authorities' datasets are not publicly available.
- 3.14.7 Based on communication with Jenny Legge (Principal Performance, Research and Consultation Officer at West Berkshire Council), there are approximately 175 children in care and 125 care leavers in the district. Given these relatively low figures, and at the request of the council, we are unable to provide a map illustrating potential hubs for these individuals in order to preserve their anonymity.

Youth Offences

- 3.14.8 In 2021, 158 children aged 10 to 17 years committed approximately 240 offences in West Berkshire, the most common of which included violence against another person (35%), drug related offences (16.9%), criminal damage (16.5%), public disorder (12.2%), and theft and handling (5.2%)²³. Most of these young offenders are male (71.5%) although there are also some female offenders (28.5%).
- 3.14.9 Young people who have offended, or who are at risk of offending or re-offending, are supported by West Berkshire's Youth Offending Services (YOS). Those supported by YOS are split into three cohorts: the In-Court Cohort; the Out-of-Court Cohort; and the Community Resolution and Prevention (CRP) Cohort.

3.15 Homelessness

- 3.15.1 0.7 households per 1,000 are in temporary accommodation in West Berkshire, which is below rates seen across the South East (2.7) and England (4). While Homelessness is not a major issue in West Berkshire in the same way it is in major metropolitan areas, it is still an issue and likely to become a growing problem due to the cost-of-living crisis²⁴.

²³ West Berkshire Youth Offending Team, 2021. Youth Justice Plan 2022/2023. Available at: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=44358&p=0>.

²⁴ Shelter, 2021. 274,000 people in England are homeless, with thousands more likely to lose their homes. Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/274000_people_in_england_are_homeless_with_thousands_more_likely_to Lose_their_homes#:~:text=London%20comes%20out%20worst%2C%20with.homeless%20in%20Brighton%20and%20Hove.

Table 3.13 – Homelessness

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Households in temporary accommodation (per 1,000)	0.7	2.7	4
Households owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act Numerator (per 1,000)	7.5	9.9	11.3

Source: MHCLG 2020/2021

3.15.2 Although West Berkshire Council was able to move all rough sleepers into temporary accommodation over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic through a joint campaign with local charity organisations, these figures are once again on the rise. It is also important to keep in mind that rough sleeping can be very difficult to trace as many rough sleepers also experience hidden homelessness which is not always captured on traditional surveys²⁵. As such, it is important to consistently monitor the homelessness situation and ensure varied individual needs are addressed as people move across the various types of homelessness.

3.16 Carers

3.16.1 According to provisional results of the 2021-2022 Caring for Others Survey²⁶, carers in West Berkshire generally care for older people, with 68% of respondents caring for individuals over 65 years and 27% caring for individuals over 85 years. The most common conditions amongst these individuals are frequently associated with older populations including physical disabilities, sight or hearing loss, and dementia. Carers are generally satisfied with the level of service provided, and the proportion of carers who are ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ satisfied in West Berkshire is consistently higher than across the South East and England, as well as having increased since the 2018 – 2019 Survey.

3.16.2 However, carers frequently suffer in other areas of their life, citing a lack of time to do some (63.1%) or any (15.3%) of the things they value or enjoy, or to look after themselves (27.9%), with some going so far as to say they are neglecting

²⁵ Crisis, 2022. Types of homelessness. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/#:~:text=Hidden%20homelessness&text=This%20means%20staying%20with%20family,leave%20the%20person%20extremely%20vulnerable.>

²⁶ West Berkshire Council, 2022. Caring for Others Survey 2021-22 – summary report.

themselves (14.8%). Carers also commonly feel they are lacking some social contact (47.7%) or feel socially isolated (13.9%), as well as lacking control over their lives (58.5%) or even having no control at all (13.4%). Finally, many carers feel they do not receive enough encouragement or support in their roles (38.9%), or do not receive any encouragement or support (20.9%).

- 3.16.3 Given that finalised Survey data is not expected to be published until November 2022, and the latest West Berkshire Carers Health Needs Assessment is from 2014/2015²⁷, it is important to continue to monitor the caring community and their needs. Especially as carers perform such a range of tasks and interact with such a diversity of individuals in their roles, their interaction with EDI-related issues will vary widely across West Berkshire.

3.17 Armed Forces

- 3.17.1 West Berkshire’s armed forces community is largely linked to Denison Barracks, located in the village of Hermitage near Newbury. There about 1,000 armed forces personnel living and working at the Barracks, primarily from the British Army (approximately 95%), although a small proportion represent the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force (approximately 5%). The link between the armed forces and responsibilities is further explored in the key legislation and policy section.
- 3.17.2 According to Captain Lorraine Dotchin (Welfare Officer at Denison Barracks), the British Army has robust existing EDI policies which are particularly relevant to the Barracks given its diverse makeup. About 5% of Denison’s personnel come from commonwealth or other nations, including a particularly large constituency of Nepalese personnel, as well as prominent Nigerian and Fijian constituencies.
- 3.17.3 Although all members of the armed forces and their families are welcome at Denison, many junior personnel do not meet the UK salary requirements to bring their families over from their home countries, so a large part of Captain Dotchin’s role involves writing letters regarding visiting families and those soldiers who wish to remain in the UK once they have completed their service. In addition, Hermitage is not well connected by transportation, nor does it have ‘international’ facilities like Nepalese or other ‘minority’ grocery stores, so it can be a difficult transition for those families that can make it to the area, especially for spouses who cannot drive or have limited English. Given these challenges,

²⁷ Mahal, S., 2014. West Berkshire Carers Health Needs Assessment 2014/2015.

many of the soldiers stationed in West Berkshire tend to be from the UK and of senior ranking.

- 3.17.4 In addition, about one third of the personnel at Denison Barracks are married and, as such, have a right to military housing. There are about 118 quarters available for married military personnel, and 28 quarters for married officers, although this is insufficient for the roughly 300 married personnel stationed at the Barracks. As a result, many married service members choose to live onsite during the week and return to their homes and families elsewhere in the country at the weekend, live at a nearby base in Oxfordshire, or find housing within the larger Hermitage community.
- 3.17.5 Beyond finding adequate and nearby housing, military families face additional challenges. While active service personnel have access to healthcare and dental care through the armed services, their families do not and have to use civilian services. Although finding a GP is a relatively straightforward, dental care is much more difficult to come by. Children must also be enrolled in civilian schools, although this is also a fairly smooth process and Denison has a close working relationship with the local system including safeguarding processes.
- 3.17.6 General, the armed forces community associated with Denison Barracks appears to be well integrated into the community, with personnel and their families using local services and facilities and participating in local events. Denison Barracks is especially involved in the veteran's community, hosting parades and memorial services, and lending out equipment for events. The Barracks even publishes a newsletter for service members and their families about opportunities to become more involved in the local community. That said, Captain Dotchin finds that she and her colleagues sometimes feel like a 'hidden community' which is not ignored by WBC and other local bodies, but rather not considered in larger policies because they are deemed to be somewhat separate from the more permanent-seeming community elements.

3.18 Racing Community

- 3.18.1 West Berkshire's racing community is one of its more unique features both within West Berkshire and across England more generally. Largely centred around the Lambourn Valley, including the parishes of Lambourn, East Garston and Great Shefford, economic activity in the area is largely centred around racehorse training and associated services²⁸.

²⁸ SQW, 2019. Horse Racing in Lambourn Valley: The Industry's Economic and Social Impacts. Available at: <https://d1jxmchgl7b0ql.cloudfront.net/documents/Lambourn-FINAL-v10.pdf?mtime=20190325112802>.

- 3.18.2 In terms of key demographic trends, economically active residents of the Lambourn Valley are more likely to be self-employed (14.7%) than residents across West Berkshire (11.3%), while economically inactive residents are more likely to be retired (14.3%) than residents across West Berkshire (12.6%)²⁹. However, conversations with Amanda Povey suggest that these figures may not fully reflect the economic status of all residents in the area, as initial engagement exercises indicate that there may be more transient, hidden labour communities which are not being captured by national datasets. There are also some concerns about immigrant and migrant workers' ability to access local services given language, transport and other similar challenges.
- 3.18.3 Looking at deprivation and the EID 2029, the Lambourn Valley performs less well than Berkshire as a whole in the domains of education, skills and training, income and employment, particularly in Central Lambourn³⁰. It also performs less well in terms of crime and barriers to housing and services, particularly in Lower Lambourn and Upper Lambourn. The Valley's relatively poor score on the education, skills and training domain is especially noteworthy as it may indicate a trend among training and equestrian staff who possess acquired informal skills, rather than formal qualifications.
- 3.18.4 The most serious challenges facing the racing community appear to be staff recruitment and housing³¹. The primary reason for recruitment challenges is the anti-social nature of many jobs associated with the racing industry. Even with higher pay, the long, unpredictable hours and the increase in weekend racing make positions less attractive for potential employees. The lack of affordable housing stock and social amenities in such a rural area heighten recruitment difficulties, especially amongst younger workers who make up a large proportion of racing staff.

²⁹ Office for National Statistics, 2011. Economic Activity by sex by age. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/dc6107ew>.

³⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019. English Indices of Deprivation 2019. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

³¹ SQW, 2019. Horse Racing in Lambourn Valley: The Industry's Economic and Social Impacts. Available at: <https://d1jxmchgl7b0ql.cloudfront.net/documents/Lambourn-FINAL-v10.pdf?mtime=20190325112802>.

4 Key Legislation and Guidance

4.1 National Policy

Equality Act 2010

4.1.1 The overarching aim of the Equality Act is to protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote a more equal society³². It legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and across society more widely, consolidating and strengthening previous anti-discriminatory legislation including the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. As well as defining who is protected from discrimination and the types of discrimination under the law, the Act also outlines what actions someone who feels they have been discriminated against can legally take.

4.1.2 Anyone with a 'protected characteristic' as identified within the Equality Act can be discriminated against. These nine characteristics are as follows:

- **Age:** A person of a particular age or persons of a particular range of ages, for example, children (0-17); younger people (aged 18-24); older people (aged 60 and over).
- **Disability:** A person with physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, i.e., disabled people.
- **Gender reassignment:** A person proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.
- **Marriage and civil partnership:** A person in a civil partnership or marriage between the same sex or opposite sex.
- **Pregnancy and maternity:** A person who is pregnant or expecting a baby and a person who has recently given birth.
- **Race:** A person defined by their colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, for example, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups.

³² Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2010. Equality Act 2010. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

- **Religion and belief:** A person with any religious or philosophical belief including a lack of belief³³.
- **Sex:** A man or a woman, recognising that women are more frequently disadvantaged.
- **Sexual orientation:** A person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex or persons of either sex.

4.1.3 There are four types of discrimination under the Equality Act including:

- **Direct discrimination:** treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others.
- **Indirect discrimination:** putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair advantage.
- **Harassment:** unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.
- **Victimisation:** treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment.

4.1.4 The Equality Act also introduces a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)^{34,35} which requires public bodies to consider all individuals in shaping policy, delivering services, and in relationships amongst their own staff, by:

- Eliminating discrimination;
- Advancing equality of opportunity; and
- Fostering good relations amongst all people when carrying out public duties.

4.1.5 This provision is particularly important within the context of EDI, as it shifts the focus of such policies away from merely addressing instances of discrimination and towards promoting equality, and equity, more broadly. This in turn helps to prevent instances of discrimination and inequality from occurring at all.

4.1.6 More specifically, the PSED requires public bodies to:

³³ Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief.

³⁴ Government Equalities Office, 2011. Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty What Do I Need to Know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85041/equality-duty.pdf.

³⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021. Technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England. Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-england>.

- Publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually; and
- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years³⁶.

4.1.7 The PSED does not require public bodies to:

- Prepare or publish equality schemes, equality action plans, equality impact assessments, or separate annual reports on equality;
- Ask every member of staff about their protected characteristics;
- Ask service users about their protected characteristics;
- Publish any more information than is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty; and
- Produce a stand-alone annual equality report.

4.1.8 The Equality and Human Rights Commission is responsible for assessing and enforcing public bodies' compliance with the PSED and its specific duties. In doing so, the Commission can issue a compliance notice to public bodies who do not comply with the specific duties and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance. While the PSED more broadly can be enforced through judicial review, its specific duties cannot.

4.1.9 In addition, as of 2021, the Armed Forces are no longer exempt from the PSED and must now fully comply with it and its individual duties³⁷. This has resulted in a new Armed Forces Covenant which aims to both better protect those with protected characteristics involved in the armed forces and provide clear, fair and effective means of handling relevant issues³⁸.

4.1.10 The Armed Forces Act 2021 further enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant into law to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing public services³⁹. Under the Armed Forces Act 2021, Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the Armed Forces in the provision of housing, education and healthcare.

³⁶ Government Equalities Office, 2011. Equality Act 2010: Specific Duties to Support the Equality Duty What Do I Need to Know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85049/specific-duties.pdf.

³⁷ Centre for Military Justice 2021. The Ministry of Defence can no longer discriminate against veterans on the grounds of their disability – it breaches their human rights. Available at: <https://centreformilitaryjustice.org.uk/the-ministry-of-defence-can-no-longer-discriminate-against-veterans-on-the-grounds-of-their-disability-it-breaches-their-human-rights/#:~:text=The%20Equality%20Act%202010%20on,effectiveness%20of%20the%20Armed%20Forces>.

³⁸ Ministry of Defence, 2021. Armed Forces Covenant. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/defence-and-armed-forces/armed-forces-covenant>.

³⁹ Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2021. Armed Forces Act 2021. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/35/contents>.

4.1.11 All councils, including West Berkshire Council, have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, which symbolises a pledge by councils to ensure that public civilians and those associated with the armed forces, including serving personnel, reservists, veterans and service families, have equal access to public services⁴⁰. Further guidance is expected to be issued which will provide further detail regarding what will be required of public authorities under the Covenant and how all parties might better comply with the PSED.

Human Rights Act 1998

4.1.12 The Equality Act is underpinned by the Human Rights Act⁴¹ which outlines the fundamental rights and freedoms everyone in the UK is entitled to, incorporating the rights defined by the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into British law.

4.1.13 The Human Rights Act includes the following 16 'Convention Rights':

- Article 2: Right to life;
- Article 3: Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment;
- Article 4: Freedom from slavery and forced labour;
- Article 5: Right to liberty and security;
- Article 6: Right to a fair trial;
- Article 7: No punishment without law;
- Article 8: Respect for your private and family life, home and correspondence;
- Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief and religion;
- Article 10: Freedom of expression;
- Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association;
- Article 12: Right to marry and start a family;
- Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect to these rights and freedoms;
- Protocol 1, Article 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property;
- Protocol 1, Article 2: Right to education;

⁴⁰ Local Government Association, 2022. Armed Forces Act 2021: background implications for councils and practical steps to get ready for the Act. Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/armed-forces-act-2021-background-implications-councils-and>.

⁴¹ Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1998. Human Rights Act 1998. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>.

- Protocol 1, Article 3: Right to participate in free elections; and
- Protocol 13, Article 1: Abolition of the death penalty.

4.1.14 While Article 14 is the most obvious reference to discrimination and equality, the entire Act is relevant to EDI, as it promotes *human* rights which are applicable to all. For some people to be treated unfairly based on a protected or other relevant characteristic is not only noncompliant with the Equality Act, but also with the Human Rights Act.

4.2 Local Policy

West Berkshire Council Equality Objectives 2015 to 2019 (2017)

4.2.1 WBC outlines its primary areas of focus in fulfilling its Equality Duty, as outlined in the Equality Act, through its published Equality Objectives⁴². These define key goals related to improving equality in the district and relevant performance measures to ensure these goals are met.

4.2.2 The four equality objectives include:

- Ensure our workforce is reflective of our communities;
- Endeavour to minimise discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity for employees and all members of our communities;
- Implement new ways of working to develop communities to be more resilient in meeting the needs of vulnerable people; and
- Close the education gap for vulnerable pupils.

4.2.3 Although a useful policy within the context of the Council as it guides equitable practices within the context of providing services, employing staff, and procuring and commissioning services, it does not directly address broader equality issues across the district, and thus does not fully fulfil the PSED. Fortunately, this gap is being addressed through this EDI Needs Assessment.

West Berkshire Council Equality Policy (2018)

4.2.4 Expanding on its Equality Objectives, WBC more fully outlines how it will achieve its vision for more equality of opportunity and respect for diversity through its

⁴² West Berkshire Council, 2017. West Berkshire Council Equality Objectives 2015-2019. Available at: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/40945/Equality-Objectives-2015-19/pdf/Equality_Objects_2015-19_final_June_2017.pdf?m=636589471617430000.

Equality Policy⁴³. This document provides a broad overview of the Council's expectations and responsibilities with respect to equality, again linking back to the Equality Duty.

4.2.5 The five main aims of the Equality Policy are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity;
- Promote equality of access;
- Demonstrate that we value diversity; and
- Promote good relations between diverse communities.

4.2.6 Again, while this a useful policy within the context of providing services, employing staff, and procuring and commissioning services within the Council, it does not directly address broader equality issues across the district. It demonstrates that WBC has a strong foundation in mitigating against discrimination and promoting equality, but a broader strategy is required to address wider reaching issues.

Equality Impact Assessment Guidance (2017)

4.2.7 As well as its overarching Equality Objectives and Equality Policy, WBC has also published Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Guidance⁴⁴. The main aims of EqIA are to ensure that Council services and their delivery are suited to the differing needs of the West Berkshire community, and to ensure that the Council provides a working environment which recognises different employees' needs and supports their ability to contribute fully. To this end, the EqIA is used to evaluate how effectively the Council is promoting equality and suggest measures to mitigate any potential inequalities, especially in terms of the protected characteristics.

4.2.8 In essence, the EqIA guidance provides a clear assessment methodology for evaluating how equitable WBC's processes, services and facilities are, as well as relevant context and rationale for that methodology. It illustrates that the Council has taken an informed, systematic approach to equalities in those spheres in which it has direct jurisdiction, as well as indicating that a similar approach could be taken district-wide. However, impact assessments are not

⁴³ West Berkshire Council, 2018. West Berkshire Council Equality Policy. Available at: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/32429/Equality-Policy/pdf/Equality_Policy_Final_2018_Eq_in_Employment_Policy.pdf?m=636512647802370000.

⁴⁴ West Berkshire Council, 2017. Equality Impact Assessment Guidance. Available at: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/38336/Guidance-on-the-Equality-Impact-Assessment-EqIA-process/pdf/Equality_Assessment_Guidance_Final_Jan_2017.pdf?m=636536011838100000.

mandatory under the Equality Act and do not necessarily demonstrate compliance with the PSED, so they cannot be used as proof of fulfilling the PSED in a court of law.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) for Berkshire West (2021)

- 4.2.9 The JHWS for Berkshire West⁴⁵, which covers West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham, defines key challenges in the area related to health and wellbeing and outlines the ways in which health and social care services can work together to address these challenges, ultimately improving outcomes for the entire population. Although not strictly under the remit of EDI, health and health-related inequalities are often linked to other types of inequalities, causing or exacerbating issues which may on the surface appear unrelated.
- 4.2.10 The challenges and aims identified within the JHWS are defined as 11 'target areas' and include:
- Helping everyone have the same chance to live a healthy life;
 - Supporting vulnerable people to live healthy lives;
 - Supporting families with young children to be healthy;
 - Helping people get over addictions to alcohol, etc;
 - Being healthy and well at work;
 - Fitter communities;
 - Supporting people with lots of health needs;
 - Supporting people who had a traumatic (difficult) childhood;
 - Building strong and healthy communities;
 - Mental health support for children and young people; and
 - Mental health support for adults.
- 4.2.11 The first target area (helping everyone have the same chance to lead a healthy life) is the most obviously linked to equality. However, all the areas support a broader vision to promote health and wellbeing across the district, regardless of protected or other relevant characteristics. In addition, achieving these aims would help to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of other equalities issues and promote equity in West Berkshire.

⁴⁵ Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group, 2020. Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy: A plan to improve people's health and wellbeing. Available at: <https://www.berkshirwestccg.nhs.uk/media/4750/joint-hwb-strategy-jan-2021.pdf>.

4.2.12 As a Health and Wellbeing Needs Assessment is being undertaken in tandem with this EDI Needs Assessment, and the two projects have distinct remits, if related goals, further evaluation of this policy should be addressed by the appropriate team.

5 Existing Best Practice and Legal Precedents

5.1 Examples of EDI Policy

5.1.1 The policies below provide two examples of thorough local authority EDI policies, highlighting the ways in which they follow best practice and how West Berkshire Council might improve upon them.

Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework (Oxfordshire County Council, 2020)

5.1.2 The relevance of Oxfordshire County's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework⁴⁶ as an example of a comprehensive EDI framework within the context of this assessment is twofold. Firstly, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire share geographic and demographic similarities which make elements of Oxfordshire's EDI Framework readily translatable to West Berkshire. Secondly, the Oxfordshire EDI Framework is comprehensive and well written, and a strong example of what West Berkshire's own framework might achieve.

5.1.3 Oxfordshire, located immediately to the north of West Berkshire, is a predominantly rural area with relatively low population density including significant open and green space, AONBs, various rivers and canals, and small villages and towns, much like West Berkshire. In addition, Oxfordshire's population is split evenly across the sexes, has a relatively standard age distribution, is primarily White-identifying and faces low levels of deprivation overall. Although Oxford has a much larger student-aged population than West Berkshire centred around Oxford University, this is not a significant enough difference to discount the policy as irrelevant to West Berkshire.

5.1.4 The purpose of the Oxfordshire EDI Framework, outlined in the policy, is to create inclusive communities, services delivery, and workplaces. Each of these three interlocking visions are in turn supported by two corresponding goals which are specific, measurable, assignable, and realistic. This fulfils four of the five criteria for SMART goals, save for 'time-related', although this criterion is addressed in the document's introduction, which includes a commitment by the Council to annually review and track the County's progress against these goals.

⁴⁶ Oxfordshire County Council, 2020. Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework. Available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/plans-performance-policy/includingeveryoneequalitiesframework.pdf>.

- 5.1.5 Supporting the six goals are four ‘underpinning principles’ which provide further guidance as to how the goals should be achieved. These principles, as well as further detail about why each is necessary, are defined in the policy as:
- Inclusion is everyone’s responsibility;
 - We listen and learn together;
 - Flexibility supports diverse needs; and
 - Diversity is embraced and celebrated.
- 5.1.6 The Framework also includes an evidence base for its existence through a succinct overview of relevant policies including the Equality Act 2010 and the PSED. Further evidence of the need for an EDI framework is provided in an outline of relevant inequalities present across Oxfordshire, highlighting those areas where EDI-related challenges are most prevalent and any particularly vulnerable groups.
- 5.1.7 Finally, the Oxfordshire EDI Framework addresses EDI in and of itself through its use of reader-friendly colours and graphics, and through the provision of an easy-read version of the document.
- 5.1.8 Although this policy largely follows best practice, it would benefit from an embedded reporting mechanism through which Oxfordshire County Council might better monitor and evaluate the success of the policy.

Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 to 2025 (Leeds City Council, 2021)

- 5.1.9 Although Leeds City Council’s EDI strategy will inherently be quite different from West Berkshire’s, as Leeds is a major metropolitan area in the North rather than a rural district in the South, Leeds City Council’s (LCC) Equality Improvement Priorities⁴⁷ still provides a strong example of a comprehensive and actionable EDI strategy, from which WBC may draw some insight.
- 5.1.10 The Leeds policy, like many public policies, opens with an outline of the Council’s overarching vision for the city and its commitments to supporting residents and following legal obligations. This includes addressing the stipulations of the Equality Act, such as safeguarding those with protected characteristics and fulfilling the PSED, as well as going beyond the Act to address other types of disadvantages, such as poverty.
- 5.1.11 The policy then goes on to outline the eight Best City Priorities, which are:

⁴⁷ Leeds City Council, 2021. Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 to 2025. Available at: [Equality improvement priorities 2021 to 2025 \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/equality-improvement-priorities-2021-to-2025).

- Age-Friendly Leeds;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Child-Friendly City;
- Culture;
- Sustainable Infrastructure;
- Inclusive Growth;
- Housing; and
- Safe, Strong Communities.

5.1.12 These city-wide aims are distinct from the three cross-council priorities, which prioritise improving EDI within LCC itself, and include addressing the Council's:

- Budget;
- Employment and organisational structure; and
- Procurement.

5.1.13 The real strength of LCC's Equality Improvement Priorities policy lies in the commentary accompanying each of the Best City Priorities. As well as the pithy title given to each priority, an additional explanation is provided which clarifies what types of inequality each priority is intended to address. This is followed by an explanation of it is important to address these disadvantages, key actions the Council will take to address them, and key measures or performance indicators to assess whether LCC is actually meeting its goals. This section takes up the bulk of the policy and manages to be both succinct and comprehensive, clearly defining what LCC hopes to achieve and how it will achieve it. The key actions and measures are particularly useful to consider as they also fulfil four of the five criteria for SMART goals, save for 'time-related', and frequently feature very specific target figures.

5.1.14 The Equality Improvement Priorities could be strengthened by a clearer evidence base, including links to further EDI-related policy and a local Needs Assessment. Although each of the priorities are accompanied by an overview of why they should be considered in the strategy, more detail such as relevant datasets or visual aids would provide greater context and more clearly demonstrate their significance. As is the case above, it would also benefit from an embedded reporting mechanism through which Leeds City Council might better monitor and evaluate its successfulness.

5.2 Legal Precedents

- 5.2.1 As EDI-related policies come into effect and associated issues become more prominent, it is more important than ever for local authorities to comply with relevant legislation. Failing to comply, and failing to get ahead of even stricter regulations, opens local authorities to the risks of judicial review and other legal actions.

Brown, R v Secretary of State for Work & Pensions (2008, EWHC 3158)

- 5.2.2 In late 2007, a proposal to shut down several Post Offices in Sussex was granted, including a branch located in the village of Old Town, Hastings. Mrs. Brown, an older and disabled resident of Old Town, subsequently sued on the grounds that she was unable to access another, farther Post Office. She claimed that the closure of the Post Office and the lack of a disability impact assessment or EqIA in the closure process indicated both a failure to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (now part of the Equality Act) and a failure to pay 'due regard' to equality duties.
- 5.2.3 The Court ultimately ruled that authorities must demonstrate 'due regard' to equality obligations, which is akin to the existing PSED set out in the Equality Act. However, the Court did not define a prescriptive way of demonstrating this 'due regard'. Instead, it stated that consideration may be exhibited through various suitable methods including reports comprised of research gathered from desk-based studies, fieldwork, and consultation and engagement exercises, much like in a Needs Assessment or evidence-based EDI strategy.
- 5.2.4 In addition, the Court outlined several best practice principles which should inform authorities' compliance with the duty to give 'due regard' to equality needs, and which are logically be addressed in this EDI Needs Assessment and its consequent Strategy. Of particular significance within the context of West Berkshire is the need to exercise 'due regard' as an integral element of public functions, integrating the duty into a deliberate approach to policy-making rather than as a 'box ticking exercise'. Furthermore, it is important for authorities to keep an appropriate record of efforts to consider and fulfil equality duties. Documents including Needs Assessments, EDI Strategies and EqIAs allow for greater transparency into public processes and serve as evidence in the event of a legal challenge.
- 5.2.5 Although this case is from several years ago, it is still very relevant to contemporary West Berkshire as it illustrates the Court's ongoing desire to uphold authorities' obligation to pay 'due regard' to equalities, an obligation which has now been codified into the PSED. In addition, the ruling provides useful best practices for WBC to continue to follow regarding the integration of

EDI and policy-making, and adequate record keeping. Finally, this case provides a very real example of the kind of legal challenges WBC could conceivably face in a similar scenario given the rural nature of the district.

Sheakh, R v London Borough of Lambeth (2021, EWHC 1745)

- 5.2.6 In 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, central government guidance was issued which urged Local Authorities to make urgent changes to their travel networks to promote low carbon and active travel in the short window before people restarted their pre-pandemic travel patterns. This resulted in the widespread establishment of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) across the UK which encouraged walking and cycling over motorised transport, particularly on local roads.
- 5.2.7 Two such LTNs were established in the London Borough of Lambeth, in Brixton Oval and Streatham respectively. These LTNs were subsequently challenged on the grounds that Lambeth Borough Council (LBC) had breached its PSED by not carrying out adequate EqlAs and by taking a 'rolling' approach to monitoring the impacts of the LTNs.
- 5.2.8 Ultimately, the Court ruled that LBC had met its PSED in establishing the LTNs because the circumstances of the pandemic and the resulting statutory guidance permitted the Council to bypass a more robust research base for establishing the LTNs. However, the Court also maintained that this practice would not be suitable under normal circumstances and that authorities who continue to take a 'rolling' approach do so 'at their peril'.
- 5.2.9 This case is particularly relevant to West Berkshire because it provides a very recent example of the ways in which Local Authorities may be challenged for not complying with the Equality Act and the PSED. While these complaints against LBC were ultimately dismissed, the Court also indicated in its ruling that as the country moves out of pandemic-era regulations it is important for Local Authorities to begin re-prioritising EDI and associated legislation.

6 Forecasting and Recommendations

6.1 Forecasting

England

- 6.1.1 The United Kingdom’s population is growing and becoming more diverse as it grows. Between mid-2020 and mid-2030 the national population is expected to increase by 2.1 million inhabitants⁴⁸. Although birth rates (6.6 million) are predicted to be slightly lower than mortality rates (6.7 million), an estimated 5.6 million people will immigrate long-term to the UK while only an estimated 3.4 million people will emigrate from the UK.
- 6.1.2 These estimates are in line with existing demographic trends, which show that minority groups within England have become increasingly more prevalent since the Census 1991⁴⁹. While most foreign-born White British, White Irish and Black Caribbean immigrants arrived prior to 1981, most South Asian and Black African immigrants arrived after 1981. More recently, the largest non-UK born ethnic group, made up of Other White immigrants primarily from Ukraine and other Central and Eastern European countries, arrived in the 2000s.
- 6.1.3 This ethnic diversity mirrors trends in religious diversity. For example, many immigrants from Poland, Nigeria and the Philippines have brought their Christian identity, while those arriving from the Middle East and South Asia identify as Muslim⁵⁰. Likewise, many Sikh immigrants hail from India, while many new Buddhists claim Thailand, Sri Lanka and China as their country of origin.
- 6.1.4 As well as becoming more ethnically and religiously diverse, England is becoming older. The baby booms following World War II and during the 1960s

⁴⁸ Office for National Statistics, 2022. National population projections: 2020-based interim. Available at: [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2020basedinterim#:~:text=3.,million%20\(6.9%25%20increase\).](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2020basedinterim#:~:text=3.,million%20(6.9%25%20increase).)

⁴⁹ Office for National Statistics, 2015. 2011 Census analysis: Ethnicity and religion of the non-UK born population in England and Wales: 2011. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18>.

⁵⁰ Office for National Statistics, 2015. 2011 Census analysis: Ethnicity and religion of the non-UK born population in England and Wales: 2011. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18>.

is reflected in population spikes among people in their mid-70s and in their 50s, respectively⁵¹. Conversely, a smaller population of teenagers reflects a decline of birth rates in the early- to mid-2000s and fertility rates in the 2020s and 2030s are assumed to be even lower. In addition, life expectancies are increasing as healthcare improves, and the population of people aged 85 years and older is expected to nearly double from 1.7 million in mid-2020 to 3.1 million in mid-2045.

- 6.1.5 These trends are significant as an aging population has specific and varied needs including more frequent and more serious healthcare, disability and mobility considerations, and more public and private assistance.

West Berkshire

- 6.1.6 Like the rest of the country, West Berkshire is expected to have an older, more diverse population in the coming decade. These changes will not only impact the demographic makeup of the district – they will also alter the challenges both faced by the inhabitants of West Berkshire and to be addressed by the Council.
- 6.1.7 According to mid-year estimates, the population of West Berkshire has grown from approximately 136,800 inhabitants in 1991 to approximately 161,000 inhabitants in 2021⁵². This figure is expected to stay relatively stable for the next two to three decades.
- 6.1.8 Looking more closely at the age breakdown of West Berkshire’s population, children and young people aged 0 to 15 years are expected to make up a smaller proportion of the overall population, dropping from 19.8% in mid-2020 to 17.1% in mid-2043. Likewise, working age adults between the ages of 16 and 64 will drop from 60.6% to 54.5% of the population. Consequently, older people aged 65 years and older will take up a much bigger share of the overall population, rising from 19.7% in mid-2020 to 28.4% in mid-2043.
- 6.1.9 Although Census 2021 data is not yet available for datasets on race and religion, West Berkshire’s ethnic diversity is expected to become more varied in line with national trends. This supported by information in the baseline regarding diversity within schools, amongst refugees and asylum seekers, and across the armed forces community.

⁵¹ Office for National Statistics, 2022. National population projections: 2020-based interim. Available at: [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2020basedinterim#:~:text=3..million%20\(6.9%25%20increase\).](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2020basedinterim#:~:text=3..million%20(6.9%25%20increase).)

⁵² West Berkshire Council, 2022. Population: West Berkshire. Available at: [https://westberkshire.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/population/#/view-report/63aeddf1d7fc44b8b4dffcd868e84eac/_iaFirstFeature/G3.](https://westberkshire.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/population/#/view-report/63aeddf1d7fc44b8b4dffcd868e84eac/_iaFirstFeature/G3)

6.2 Recommendations

- 6.2.1 As results from the Census 2021 are published throughout 2022 and 2023, it is important to monitor those datasets which are most relevant to those impacted by the socio-economic indicators, protected characteristics, and features of other relevant groups outlined in the baseline assessment. A full breakdown of the Census 2021 release plans is available on the ONS website⁵³.
- 6.2.2 West Berkshire Council should also seek to draw on Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector data. This will help to flesh out some of the figures provided by national and regional datasets, providing a more detailed picture of West Berkshire's population specifically. VCSE and other third party data, such as that provided through the Citizens Advice Bureau, can be used to help illustrate a local authority's compliance with the PSED.
- 6.2.3 Where comprehensive datasets are not yet available or are not included in existing data collection programmes, West Berkshire Council would benefit from undertaking its own data collection exercises to better map where vulnerable groups might be located across the district and what their individual needs might be. In some cases, a more in-depth consultation programme may be required, especially in regard to the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, refugees and asylum seekers, and at-risk children, youth and young people. Qualitative data borne out of such a programme would allow the Council to get under the skin of these groups' core challenges and their root causes, helping them to fully address key issues and avoid misdirecting efforts and funding.
- 6.2.4 Overall, this Needs Assessment is a strong first step by the Council to identify EDI challenges, opportunities and vulnerable groups, and illustrates a commitment to comply with the Equality Act, the PSED, and its specific duties. However, it does not actually prove compliance. To do so, West Berkshire Council will need to take the key trends and issues identified above and use them to inform meaningful, tangible objectives, which are reflective of West Berkshire's diverse population now and in the future.

⁵³ Office for National Statistics, 2022. Release plans. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/aboutcensus/releaseplans>.

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West Berkshire Council

An Interim Summary of Findings

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Executive Summary

West Berkshire Council (the Council) has commissioned The Equal Group (TEG) to develop an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) framework, informed by the lived experiences of residents. To achieve this, we have engaged with those living and/or working in West Berkshire to gain their perspectives on West Berkshire's current EDI related work, what is going well within that and where improvements are needed.

We launched an EDI survey in October 2022; the survey closed in December 2022 with circa 500 responses (this figure also includes responses to the easy read version of the survey). This level of engagement is a positive signifier of people's willingness to make West Berkshire a better place to live and work, and is testament to the efforts of those who worked to encourage engagement internally. We also facilitated a total of five focus groups in November and December 2022, as detailed below.


The survey and focus group insights revealed very clear and consistent themes. When asked what is going well in relation to EDI, we heard that the commissioning of Educafe has been a really positive force for community engagement and inclusion. It was clear that the community has also been welcoming towards Ukrainian refugees and has embraced diversity. The internal efforts of the Council were also cited, with examples such as the creation of the Equality Forum, a partnership with a local LGBTQ+ charity and policies being available in multiple languages all mentioned. Looking at health services, we heard that outreach centres were set up in rural areas to promote Covid-19 vaccine takeup.

We also heard very clear themes in relation to where the Council should focus its efforts going forward. The most frequently mentioned groups experiencing inequality and/or discrimination were:

- those with disabilities;
- those facing other access barriers, such as rurality, socio-economic exclusion and age-related exclusion (both young and old);
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; and,
- displaced individuals.

While these are the key findings from the data analysis, we want to also highlight that 18% of respondents indicated that they have experienced bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation in relation to a protected characteristic. This was even higher for the respondents to the easy read survey, with 21% reporting such experiences.

In addition, a number of comments indicated that greater clarity on EDI plans and progress is needed, as some respondents did not feel they had sufficient insight on what the Council has done in order to answer questions on the topic.



These insights will be used alongside existing research (such as the previously commissioned EDI needs assessment) and the outputs of collaborative workshops with key Council stakeholders, to inform the next steps, including delivery of a high-level, draft EDI framework.

Background

West Berkshire Council has commissioned The Equal Group to develop an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) framework, informed by the lived experiences of residents. This framework will express a vision, principles, and objectives, with an accompanying action plan to support the delivery of the Council's Strategy.

To ensure this framework is driven by the perspectives and experiences of those living and/or working in West Berkshire, we undertook an engagement process which consisted of an EDI survey (including a separate easy read version) and a series of five focus groups. Focus groups were held with the following groups in November and December of 2022:

- The Equality Forum
- Engaging and Enabling Local Communities
- Public Partners
- West Berkshire Councillors
- Voluntary and Community Sector

At regular intervals, we engaged with key West Berkshire Council contacts, Sam Shepherd and Pamela Voss, to sense-check and discuss what we had heard from respondents, ensuring that any insights taken were accurate and free from bias.

The purpose of this document is to present an interim summary of findings. Following analysis of the data, we identified the following key themes as priority areas for the Council to address:

1. Disability and accessibility
2. Other access barriers: rurality, socio-economic exclusion and age-related exclusion
3. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities
4. Displaced individuals

More information on each of these themes is detailed below, along with a visual representation of survey responses and quotes, where relevant. The confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents is extremely important to us – any quotes included in this report have been selected because they do not contain any identifying or compromising information, but help to highlight people's lived experiences.

Before rounding up with our next steps, we have also included a note on three 'Additional Insights' which came up repeatedly during the data analysis and which encompass overarching threads woven across the lived experience of disparate groups engaging with the Council. While outside the scope of this piece of work, we recommend that these are subject to further exploration and action by the Council.

Key Findings

In this section of the report, we have provided an overview of the key themes that arose from our engagement process. These findings cover both the original survey responses and the easy read survey responses, as well as what we heard in the focus groups. The following key findings are not prioritised according to frequency of occurrence or level of importance - each of the themes should be taken with equal consideration. Below is our summary of all data received.

Disability and Accessibility

Across several questions relating to issues of equity/inequity, themes around disability and accessibility came up several times. Whilst there was some acknowledgement of the Council's efforts in this area (namely, working with businesses to make entry-way alterations and implementation of the Blue Badge scheme), concerns around the accessibility of local amenities were particularly prominent. Some of the examples we heard include: station car park lifts being consistently out of order, inadequate disabled parking at hospitals and taxis being unable to facilitate electric wheelchairs. Numerous comments in the survey and the focus groups suggested that a move towards technology and online delivery (including GP services, Council communications and card-only payments, among other examples) has created barriers to engagement for individuals with learning disabilities.

"Even though WBC and other local services try to be fair and inclusive the reality is the cost of everything, and shortage of public transport and services means anyone who is poor is excluded and marginalised, and this hits people with disabilities harder than anyone else"

There were also a number of references to a general misunderstanding of neurodiversity. An insufficient grasp of neurodiversity (including the impact it can have on individuals, and what it means for the Council's service delivery as a consequence), can create additional access barriers. Survey respondents cited several implications of this, such as indirect discrimination in the education system and difficulty engaging with the Council's website.

Although only mentioned explicitly by one survey respondent, there appeared to be an underlying sentiment that disability is not treated as a priority, but rather 'added-on' after all the thinking has already concluded. The Council should also consider how the above examples may intersect with rurality to compound the sense of exclusion for those impacted. The pie chart below indicates responses to the survey question: 'I feel West Berkshire Council provides a range of services to meet the needs of people from all backgrounds and experiences'. There is significant variation across the responses, with relatively high proportions of neutral and disagree responses.

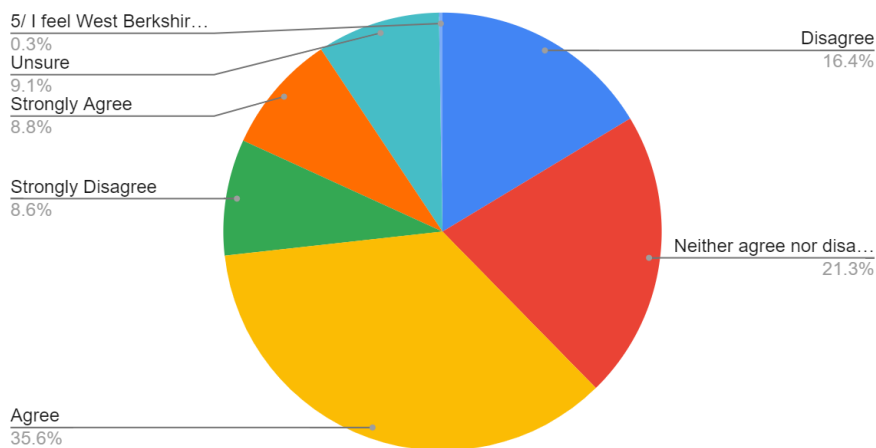


Figure 1: A pie chart showing responses to the question: 'I feel West Berkshire Council provides a range of services to meet the needs of people from all backgrounds and experiences'.

Several respondents made suggestions to improve in this area, with the most common focusing on strengthening engagement with disabled communities. Some examples include: devising a Disability Steering Group within the Council to ensure access considerations remain at the core of decision-making; more free opportunities for daytime socialising for people with complex physical and learning disabilities, and neurodiversity training for service delivery partners (such as GP practitioners).

Other Access Barriers: Rurality; Socio-economic Exclusion and Age-Related Exclusion

Rurality

While protected characteristics should form the basis of any EDI assessment and strategy (particularly for the Council as an organisation subject to the Public Sector

Equality Duty), a holistic approach to inclusion reflects the nuances of the local area, extending beyond what is set out in the Equality Act, where relevant. In West Berkshire, it is crucial to address the relevance of geography in our assessment of equity and inclusion. Our engagement process found significant disparities between opportunities and access for those living rurally, compared with those living in or close to hubs, such as Newbury.

This finding corroborates the outcome of the EDI Needs Assessment the Council had previously commissioned. Living rurally can, in and of itself, produce a heightened sense of alienation – particularly in the absence of strong community ties. This sense of marginalisation may be compounded by insufficient or expensive transportation into main social hubs (ie., community events) or important community services (such as general and dental health care). As indicated by the quote below, it is important to consider the impact that this may have on those with fewer financial resources.

“Living in a rural village, it can be quite isolating for young families that are not as privileged as the majority. The poor public transport links exacerbates this.”

It is also important that the Council considers the ways in which digital exclusion may impact rural communities and their sense of integration. A significant number of respondents indicated that much of the Council’s approach to external communications is conducted virtually, meaning that for those with less access to the Internet, they may have to miss out on community events or Council updates.

Socio-economic exclusion

Tied in with the above, several survey and focus group participants spoke to socio-economic exclusion as an area of significant inequality in West Berkshire. Given the relative affluence of West Berkshire as a district, there is a risk that those from less privileged backgrounds fall under the radar of the majority. This can be particularly damaging for social mobility and equity of opportunity, and serves to highlight the importance of finding suitable means of engaging with groups typically defined as ‘hard-to-reach’.

We also heard that complex physical/mental/emotional outcomes are disproportionately worse in deprived communities. In seeking to create a more equitable place to live, it is crucial that the Council seeks out the underlying causes of these problems. Many of these outcomes are the consequence of being institutionally

underserved¹ and should be explored in more detail to understand the contributing factors.

Some respondents felt that the Council is 'biased towards wealthier areas' due to a perceived lack of efforts towards rural and community village integration. This can, unintentionally, feed the sense of alienation of those living rurally and also experiencing financial hardship.

We asked survey respondents to indicate how strongly they agree with the statement: 'I feel the local area is one that people from all backgrounds can thrive and be part of the community':

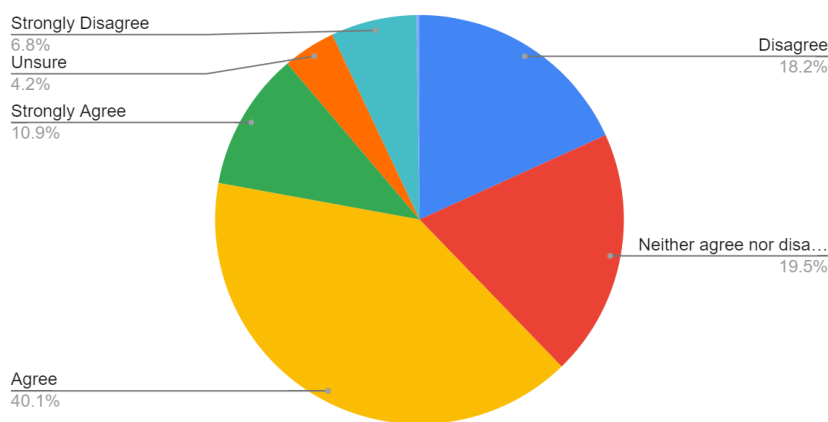


Figure 2: A pie chart showing responses to the question: 'I feel the local area is one that people from all backgrounds can thrive and be part of the community'.

Although the question was looking more broadly, socioeconomic status (as a key indicator of access to resources and opportunities) is strongly correlated with a sense of thriving. Accordingly, we include Figure 2 as a depiction of inequity and disparity, rather than an absolute representation of socio-economic exclusion. That said, the sentiments shared in the survey and focus groups suggest this is a key area for the Council to address.

Age-Related Exclusion

Exclusion based on age was also a prominent theme, both for young people and the elderly. The overarching theme for young people appears to be the reduction in youth services and activities that promote integration. We acknowledge that this is a tricky

¹ N.B, this does not indicate intention. We use the term 'institutionally underserved' to describe the ways in which majority bias and blind spots in people's lived experiences can result in a consistent failure to address the needs of marginalised groups, whether conscious or not.

balance to strike in the face of budget cuts and limited Council resources. Much of the discussion on this topic centred around youth groups and local clubs that would provide social time, and where these already exist, opening up a free option for parents with lower incomes. There were also some concerns that young people experiencing neurodiversity and/or mental health issues are underserved. We recommend that this is subject to further exploration by the Council so that action can be taken to address this priority need.

For older people, the overarching theme appears to be digital exclusion. Several respondents highlighted that it is incumbent upon the Council to reach out to the elderly, who may find the prospect of contacting the Council or visiting the offices intimidating or simply impossible.

“Elderly in villages have very little access to social activities if they have low incomes and cannot afford to pay for social days out involving transport costs as well.”

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Communities

Our engagement process highlighted significant concerns in relation to the experiences of GRT communities in West Berkshire. Prejudice and discrimination against these communities appear to be rife across multiple aspects of daily life. We heard examples from the education system, the justice system and life in the local community more broadly. One survey respondent described discrimination as 'widespread', while others alluded to the general misunderstanding of these communities among residents and Council members.

“On a monthly basis, I receive unsolicited comments from strangers about how Gypsies are unwelcome in the locality. I have no idea why – perhaps they think I am a Gypsy? My husband (who is White British) never receives these comments. I am staggered at the strength and frequency of these discriminatory comments against Gypsies.”

Some survey respondents made mention of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month in June as a key event that the Council should mark. While the approach does need to be broader in scope than this, such occasions provide an opportunity to raise awareness and promote a greater understanding of minority groups. The broader approach should be grounded in the lived experiences of GRT communities, and

should seek to identify the challenges they are facing, their experiences of discrimination, and what interventions are needed to build inclusion.

It is also worth noting that the Ethnic Minority & Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) did not receive much mention in the focus groups or the survey. This is a significant area of work with specific interventions aimed at supporting the inclusion of GRT communities, but did not come through very strongly in our engagement process. This sits within an overarching theme (covered under the 'Additional Insights' section on page 10) about publicising what the Council is already doing well in relation to EDI. Highlighting positive contributions is a crucial part of any external EDI communications strategy; ensuring residents are aware of (and can see the progress of) the Council's efforts to address disparities is an important aspect of building trust.

Displaced Individuals

The term 'displaced individuals' in this context refers to any individual who has had to leave their home country due to external pressures on their safety and or stability – it therefore covers both refugees and asylum seekers. Differential treatment of migrant groups was consistently mentioned across our engagements, with a perception that the schemes are not balanced across the various (Ukrainian, Hong Kong and Afghanistan) communities. We understand some of this to be impacted by the Government's categorisations of migrant communities. As such, there are limits as to what the Council can do to influence change on a large scale. Despite this, there are a number of actions that are within the Council's powers which can help to improve experiences at the local level, as detailed below.

It was clear from the survey and focus groups that more support around understanding UK systems and processes is needed to support integration and adjustment. There were numerous mentions of this problem, with those seeking asylum often left to find their own way around health and education systems. Respondents also told us that they would like to see updates to translation services to ensure they reflect changes in the local population. Woven across the themes of displaced individuals and GRT communities was the perception of 'predisposed ideas' and the impact these may be having on the experiences of primary care and education systems. There were some suggestions that multi-cultural awareness training for service providers could help to address some of these issues.

"As a refugee charity we are aware of a lot of discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers. The national 'hostile environment' impacts on everyone in some way. Dispersed asylum seekers are having their human rights abused by the failings of the system in place

to deal with them. This is a national issue, but the local coordination around their support needs to be far better.”

Additional Insights

In addition to the key themes highlighted in this report, there are several other notable insights that we felt were important to address. 18% of survey respondents indicated that they have experienced bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation in relation to a protected characteristic. This percentage increases to 21% for those responding to the easy read survey. While it is outside the scope of this work, it is highly recommended that the Council spends some time reflecting on its reporting and communications processes to ensure instances can be captured and addressed.

We also identified a need for greater communication of EDI plans and progress – several respondents described a lack of clarity on what the Council has already done (or intends to do going forward) as limiting the depth of their survey responses. While the publication of the EDI framework should address some of this obscurity, it is worth reaffirming the critical role that communication plays in the success of any EDI strategy. On a similar note, we recommend that the Council spends some time thinking about the tone and language that will sit alongside the Council’s EDI Action Plan. As captured by this survey response, the communications strategy should focus on *“Making the discussion less about falling foul of legislation and more about the positive attributes of EDI to work and performance of community, organisation and teams”*.

Finally, and relatedly, a robust EDI strategy requires all key stakeholders to be aligned on the current position to identify areas of priority focus. During the focus group with Councillors, it appeared that there are quite disparate views concerning the current state of affairs, with some representatives describing West Berkshire as inclusive and others drawing on areas of significant inequality. Throughout this report, we have referenced the need to consistently and habitually engage the lived experiences of marginalised groups – this is crucial to understand where disparity exists and how to address it most effectively.

Next Steps

This report covers high-level themes from the data. Our immediate next steps will be to continue analysing responses and ensuring we have captured all of the most salient points. The findings detailed in this report, as well as the outcome of our collaborative



workshops with key members of the Council, will be used to produce a draft EDI framework. This will be delivered by the 24th of March 2023.

Following feedback from the Council, we will work to produce a final framework that takes into account all comments and suggestions. We will remain on hand to answer any questions and discuss how the framework is disseminated to all West Berkshire Council staff and residents following internal review and sign-off.

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West Berkshire Council

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

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Context

West Berkshire Council (**the Council**) has commissioned The Equal Group (TEG) to develop an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) framework, informed by the lived experiences of residents. This framework will express a Vision, Strategic Principles, and Objectives, with an accompanying Action Plan to support the delivery of the Council's Strategy.

To ensure this Framework is driven by the perspectives and experiences of those living and/or working in West Berkshire, The Equal Group undertook an engagement process which consisted of an EDI survey (including a separate easy read version) and a series of five focus groups conducted in November and December of 2022. Please see the Engagement Report for further details.

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), the Council is required to demonstrate due regard for equalities considerations, as set out under the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#). This requires the Council to consider the ways in which it is able to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The development of this Framework intends to support the Council in meeting its duty, which has a specific focus on the nine defined [protected characteristics](#): sex, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, disability, gender reassignment, race, marriage and civil partnership, and sexual orientation. While this forms the basis of the Framework and its accompanying action plan, the Council also wishes to understand where it can *go beyond its legal duty* to eliminate sources of disadvantage that are not included within the scope of the Equality Act.

In order to gather the relevant data needed for this Framework, TEG and the Council sought to engage with those whose voices are seldom heard. In doing so, we identified a priority need to address barriers faced by:

- People living with disabilities;
- Those living rurally;
- Those from low socioeconomic backgrounds;
- Young and elderly people;
- Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities;
- Displaced communities.



In any case, it is imperative that the Council considers the ways in which personal characteristics may intersect to produce particular and more acute needs.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) should be carried out by the Council any time a new policy or process is being considered. EqIA's ensure that any potential equalities risks associated with the proposed introduction of a new policy or process are considered and actively mitigated against. We recommend that the Council goes beyond the protected characteristics and embeds a focus on all key excluded groups set out in this Framework when refreshing its approach to EqIA's¹. In addition to this, we recommend that the Council takes stock of all existing evidence that indicates inequality, and aligns itself with key recent legislative updates, such as the Armed Forces Act (2021).

Building Understanding

When making recommendations, TEG believes it is vital to acknowledge where action has been taken, with a view to build on the positive work that the Council has already started. We recognise the Council's commitment to improving its understanding of EDI, primarily through its commissioning of the EDI Needs Assessment (not conducted by TEG) and the development of this Framework. We firmly support the Council's belief that any EDI progress should be driven by data, and encourage the Council to see this Framework as a foundation to build on.

Through the engagement phase of this project, the Council and TEG were able to hear from over 500 people (across the surveys and focus groups) to gather perspectives on EDI. In conjunction with the EDI Needs Assessment, this has provided a detailed understanding of some of the key issues. However, this is only a small proportion of the local population, and should be built upon in the coming years. We understand that the Council is on a journey of continuous learning and recognises that it needs to take a more intentional approach to building a more inclusive and equitable district.

When seeking to build understanding, the Council should endeavour to engage with, learn about and foster strong relationships with all local communities – this includes the racing community, the Armed Forces and any other groups present within West Berkshire. Further to this, the Council should seek to tailor its approach to engagement

¹ N.B. There are some legally defined exceptions to the PSED, whereby the Government has identified specific situations in which implementation of the PSED may interfere with other legislation. 'Immigration' is one of the exceptions set out under Section 18 of the Act. The Council should carefully consider what this means in practice for displaced individuals in West Berkshire, and how it can balance the exercise of its duties with a need to foster inclusion in the local community. See pages 13–14 of this [briefing paper](#) for further information.



with each group in line with their shared experiences/circumstances. We have provided additional context on this within the Action Plan.

Vision and Strategic Principles

In February 2023, TEG held a collaborative workshop with Sam Shepherd and Pamela Voss. The purpose of this workshop was to bring together the key findings from our engagement process, reflect on how we would like to be able to describe EDI in West Berkshire one year from now, and to identify enablers and barriers to progress. Taking all of this into account, we arrived at the following Vision and Strategic Principles. We have utilised the word 'Thrive' to tie in with the sense of 'equity of opportunity'.

Vision

West Berkshire: where everyone can thrive

Strategic Principles

1. *Everyone is seen and heard*

- We promote visibility and inclusion for everyone
- We seek to 'level the playing field' for all
- We support and enable communities so they can thrive
- We look to empower local communities to lead change

2. *Everyone is celebrated*

- We embrace all forms of diversity that exist within West Berkshire
- We acknowledge and celebrate events that promote diversity and inclusion
- We work collaboratively with our partners to build mutual understanding of our diverse communities
- We aim to become community leaders for equity and inclusion

3. *Everyone has a responsibility*

- We are all committed to inclusion
- We respect and empower; we do 'with' each other, not 'to'
- We welcome and recognise everyone's strengths
- We encourage everyone to speak up when change is needed and support this with appropriate policies and processes

4. *Everyone is understood*

- We learn from the lived experiences of others
- We value diversity in all forms
- We acknowledge that we can't remove barriers that we aren't aware of

- We are committed to recognising and addressing exclusion

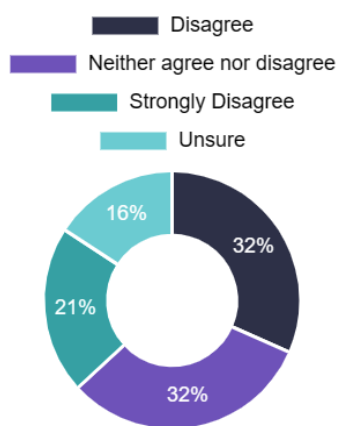
Objectives

This section of the report aims to define a clear set of objectives that the Council is seeking to achieve within the next year. These Objectives are also based on the output of our collaborative workshop. We have split the objectives to cover the community and the workplace, ensuring that the Council is able to direct change both internally and externally.

While this makes it easier to identify progress markers, it is important not to look at the objectives in isolation, and to instead consider the relationship between the two. Internal efforts to increase understanding of EDI can be a significant enabler of external progress, helping the Council and its partners to better cater to the needs of the local population. Similarly, an external focus on EDI should also help to reinforce EDI in the Council – especially where gaps in representation or knowledge have been identified.

West Berkshire is, at large, an affluent area in which people can thrive, but this overarching truth can mask pockets of disadvantage that exist within local communities. ‘Equity’ is about recognising the fact that not everyone starts from the same place. We have included below a high-level summary of key data, focusing on three significant disparities in the survey responses we collected. A fuller breakdown of the data is provided in the Engagement Report.

I feel West Berkshire Council’s approach to community issues is inclusive, fair and considerate of a diverse range of backgrounds:

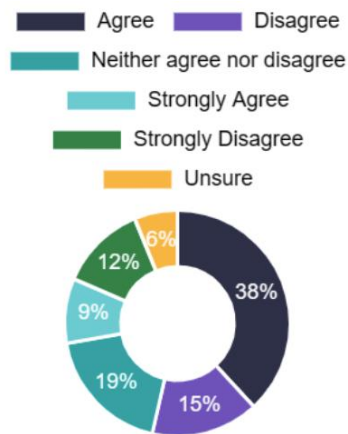


For respondents indicating their ethnicity is White, 11% said that they ‘disagree’ with the above statement and a further 6% ‘strongly disagree’. This compares with 32% of respondents from an Ethnic Minority background who said that they ‘disagree’, and a further 21% who ‘strongly disagree’, as per Figure 1.

Figure 1: A pie chart showing survey responses from respondents of Ethnic Minority backgrounds.



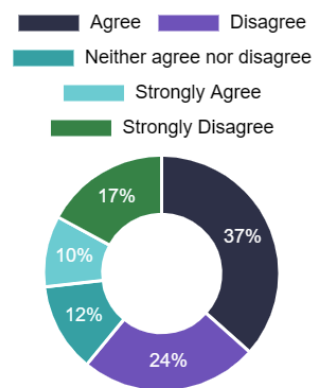
I feel that West Berkshire Council as an organisation is inclusive, fair and considerate of a diverse range of backgrounds:



For respondents without a (hidden or visible) disability, 10% 'disagree' with the above statement, and a further 3% 'strongly disagree'. This compares with 15% of respondents with a disability who said that they 'disagree', and a further 12% who 'strongly disagree', as per Figure 2.

Figure 2: A pie chart showing survey responses from respondents with disabilities.

I feel the local area is one which provides a range of services to meet the needs of people from all backgrounds and experiences:



For respondents identifying as heterosexual, 17% 'disagree' with the above statement, and a further 4% 'strongly disagree'. This compares with 24% of respondents identifying as LGBTQ+ who said that they 'disagree', and a further 17% who 'strongly disagree', as per Figure 3.

Figure 3: A pie chart showing survey responses from respondents identifying as LGBTQ+.

In addition to this, we know from the EDI Needs Assessment that:

- West Berkshire has six Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), scoring in the 1st to 5th deciles. This means that they are amongst the 50% most deprived in the country, according to the English Indices of Deprivation 2019.
- Those living in rural households in West Berkshire are at higher risk of experiencing digital exclusion, fuel poverty and food deserts than those living in more urban areas.

- Compared with the South East (19.3%) and England overall (18%), West Berkshire has a higher proportion of children with Autism (33.5%).

The data shows us why this EDI Framework is needed – the following Objectives set out what the Council aims to achieve through this Framework.

Community Objectives	Associated Strategic Principles
1. There is a sense of mutual understanding around EDI in West Berkshire, including why it is important and the actions the Council is taking to advance it	1, 2, 3, 4
2. The Council has a comprehensive understanding of accessibility challenges, and how to overcome barriers for different groups	1, 4
3. Improved engagement with a wider range of community networks and groups	1, 2, 4
4. The Council is known for celebrating diversity in West Berkshire and residents from all backgrounds feel included	1, 2, 4

Workplace Objectives	Associated Strategic Principles
5. The Council has refreshed its approach to equalities and is able to demonstrate compliance with the PSED	1, 3, 4
6. Existing policies and procedures to advance equality are reviewed and updated. Where gaps are identified these are addressed in existing policies and procedures, or by creating new ones	1, 2, 3, 4
7. The Council has established a sense of collective responsibility for EDI progress, whereby all key stakeholders understand the purpose and benefits	3



Workplace Objectives	Associated Strategic Principles
8. An increased sense of belonging and psychological safety among all Council employees	1, 3



Action Plan

Taking the Vision, Strategic Principles and the Objectives into account, we have devised a 12-month Action Plan for the Council. This plan seeks to build on each of these areas to help the Council move from a theoretical understanding to practical implementation. Our recommendations (both internal and external) are presented using a RAG system to indicate the timescales within which we recommend West Berkshire Council should implement the suggested improvements:

Red (Short-term) – To be completed within the next 3 months;

Amber (Medium-term) – To be completed within the next 6 months;

Green (Long-term) – to be completed within the next 12 months.

In developing this Action Plan, we have produced a set of recommendations that take into account the limited resources available in the Council. While we recommend that the Council pursues an ambitious approach to become community leaders for inclusion in the future, it is important that the actions set out in this 12 month plan focus on enabling the Council to meet the PSED.

The colour coding system is not used to indicate level of importance – all activities set out in this Action Plan should be considered priority areas of focus for the next year. The actions are colour coded to reflect the fact that some of the actions can be taken more quickly than others. There are a number of actions which TEG can support the Council to achieve, denoted by an asterisk (*), and others that we believe the Council should lead.

We have left the 'Suggested Responsibility' column blank to provide the Council with the opportunity to agree the most appropriate department for each action to sit with. We strongly recommend that this forms part of the stakeholder testing and decision-making process as a key way of building accountability for the Action Plan's success.



Focus	Recommendation	Justification	Associated Objectives	Suggested Responsibility	Timeframe
External [1]	Identify (and build an approach to engage with) local underrepresented community groups / networks	<p>Several respondents indicated to us that the Council's community engagement has been limited and narrow in approach thus far. There was a general sentiment that the Council has not made the most of the opportunity to build relationships with the wide variety of community networks in the local population.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council particularly considers how best to engage with the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBT+ Communities • GRT communities • Disability networks • Young mums • Carers • Armed Forces and Veterans 	2, 3, 4		Identification of groups / networks within 3 months
					Engagement strategy built and commenced within 6 months
External [2]	Establish an external EDI comms strategy	An EDI communications strategy aims to simplify the approach to sharing EDI updates and plans with stakeholders (in this case, residents and partners). This will help to ensure that the Council has a consistent and joined-up approach to its external messaging. Regular communications should aid the Council in: conveying the importance of EDI, raising	1, 3		Within 12 months

		<p>awareness of future plans, and empowering local communities to drive positive change.</p> <p>The types of information the Council wishes to share is to be agreed internally, but it may be helpful to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events that the Council is celebrating; • Actions the Council has taken or plans to take to embed EDI in its wider strategy; • The positive work of ERGs within the Council; • EDI statements from the Executive Team; • Learnings from EDI training; • Updates to processes that will help to make West Berkshire a more inclusive place to live and work. <p>It is imperative to ensure that an inclusive approach to external communications is at the heart of any agreed strategy (particularly ensuring that the method of communication does not create or exacerbate digital exclusion, and considers accessibility). Conducting a light-touch EqIA here may help the Council to mitigate against any equalities risks for particular groups.</p>			
<p>External [3]</p>	<p>Seek to understand the barriers to standing for local election for underrepresented groups</p>	<p>The Council should seek to be representative of the local population it serves. Where particular groups appear to be standing in low numbers, we advise that the Council explores the barriers (and interventions required to overcome them) through continuous engagement. It can also help to consider if there is overrepresentation from particular demographics in order to consider a) do those groups have access to additional resources and what can be done to redress the balance; b) what is positive about their experience and</p>	<p>3</p>		<p>Within 12 months</p>

		<p>whether this be retained / replicated; c) how can those from demographics that are well represented or overrepresented be engaged to mitigate this by representing others?</p> <p>This process should result in an increased awareness of the lived experiences of marginalised communities, and feeds into the 'Everyone is understood' Strategic Principle.</p>			
External [4]	<p>Review commissioned services (such as Educafe) to understand what worked and how to replicate the success/expand the service</p>	<p>We recognise that the Council is facing budgetary constraints. This highlights the need to strategically evaluate the success of previously commissioned services (particularly of Educafe) to replicate success and ensure any future spending is driven by a sense of 'what works'.</p> <p>Following review, the Council should seek to identify how the approach can be replicated or expanded. There is a need to consider whether such services can also be made available outside of main hubs such as Newbury, so as to allow for further rural integration (perhaps through the use of mobile units).</p>	4		Ongoing
External [5]	<p>Consider the feasibility of fortnightly 'community transport' days whereby those living rurally are provided with free travel into the main social hubs</p>	<p>According to the EDI Needs Assessment, 36% of residents live in rural areas and small settlements in West Berkshire. Inadequate and expensive transportation was repeatedly mentioned as a barrier for rural residents. Recognising that the Council can only do so much within one year, we suggest that fortnightly 'community transport' days, especially where these are aligned with particular social/celebration events, are trialled.</p>	2		Within 6 months

		<p>We recommend this is done for a period of 3 months initially to see whether the activity has achieved its desired aim of rural integration and community building. Failing this, the Council should seek to explore additional barriers.</p> <p>While ideally both Action 4 and 5 would be implemented, Action 5 is of increased importance in the absence of Action 4.</p>			
External / Internal [6]	Sign up to the Disability Confident Scheme	Our engagement with staff, residents and partners revealed a general sentiment that disability is not treated as a priority for the Council. The Disability Confident Scheme's tiered approach allows for clear direction and progression metrics to create a more intentional approach to disability inclusion.	2, 3, 4		Within 3 months
External / Internal [7]	Identify an EDI calendar to roll out across the Council	An EDI Calendar sets out awareness days, months and events for the year. We recommend that the Council adopts the use of an existing calendar and shares this internally to raise awareness and promote education. Externally, we recommend that the Council shares community posts about the events contained in the Calendar to promote community inclusion.	4, 8		Within 3 months
External / Internal [8]	Review the Council's approach to EqIAs and identify areas for improvement*	EqIA's help to ensure that all new policies and procedures are designed with inclusion at their core and that any potential adverse effects can be accounted for and mitigated. Whilst the Council is not legally obligated under the PSED to conduct EqIA's, they can help to demonstrate compliance. We strongly recommend that a consistent and holistic structure around conducting these is agreed within the	1, 5, 6		Within 3 months

		<p>Council, ensuring all stakeholders responsible for conducting them are informed of the why, the how and the when.</p> <p>Based on the findings of TEG's engagement process, the EDI Needs Assessment, and other recent legislative changes, the Council should consider adding in additional groups to the EqIA process.</p>			
External / Internal [9]	Build a guidance document for community officers to work more collaboratively when engaging in rural outreach activities	<p>We are aware that the Council (alongside Voluntary and Community Sector partners) have already made positive strides to engage with various rural communities, presenting a strong opportunity to build on the work that has been done to date. We recommend that a guidance document is produced and shared with those engaging in outreach to ensure a standardised approach to sign-posting and outreach methods. The guidance should also seek to encourage the regular sharing of information between outreach officers to ensure an informed approach on 'what works'.</p>	7		Within 6 months
Internal [10]	Develop a specific 'Reasonable Adjustments' policy*	<p>Whilst the Council has a Reasonable Adjustments Flow Chart to provide guidance on access to funding, not all staff who could benefit from reasonable adjustments may be aware that they are entitled to them. Creating a policy will help to ensure that all staff who require adjustments due to a disability are informed about what the process is and what support they are entitled to.</p> <p>Furthermore, a policy will provide assurance to staff that, even if they do not want/need adjustments due to a disability at present, they will be able to access them in the future</p>	6, 8		Within 3 months



		should this change over time. It is crucial that the Council is aware that insufficient understanding and/or application of this process could result in a type of disability discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. In an effort to increase awareness, the Council may wish to first engage in training to better understand reasonable adjustment processes.			
Internal [11]	Develop a training programme to promote EDI awareness*	<p>Throughout our engagement process, we identified an acute need to improve understanding of particular characteristics, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodiversity (Neurodiversity can, in many circumstances, fall within the definition of disability under The Equality Act); • Disability; and, • GRT communities. <p>We recommend that this training is first conducted with senior leaders to ensure those directing and delivering on the key aspects of the Council Strategy are equipped with the knowledge, skills and encouragement to embody EDI in their day-to-day responsibilities.</p> <p>We also recommend that EDI training is followed up with a reflection session for attendees to discuss what they have learned, how it can positively impact the Council's priorities and also how the learnings can be further disseminated throughout the workforce.</p>	7, 8		<p>Senior Leadership and Directorate Leads within 3 months</p> <p>Expansion of the EDI Awareness training to managers within 6 months</p>

<p>Internal [12]</p>	<p>Establish an approach to engaging with Employee Resource Groups (ERG)*</p>	<p>ERGs bring lived experience and, when supported, can help to foster a sense of collective responsibility, as per Strategic Principle 3. We understand that there are a number of ERGs already set up at the Council, but that there is not a structured approach to engaging with them.</p> <p>We suggest that Executive Directors or other relevant senior leaders within the Council convene to agree an approach to this. The Council should seek to establish OKR's with each ERG, understand how frequently they gather (and whether this is in their lunch breaks or in paid time), and what level of engagement they would like with senior leaders.</p> <p>Once the above has been established, we recommend that an Executive Sponsor is agreed for each ERG, and that this individual will be responsible for attending meetings (frequency as per the group's desire) and taking suggestions/recommendations to other senior leaders where budget can be discussed and agreed to support initiatives.</p>	<p>7, 8</p>		<p>Within 6 months</p>
<p>Internal [13]</p>	<p>Establish an internal EDI Communications strategy*</p>	<p>Much like an external EDI Communications strategy, an internal strategy is about building a sense of collective responsibility and ensuring clarity around EDI plans. For an internal strategy, greater focus should be placed on establishing accountability metrics, such as who will own the action and when progress is expected to be achieved.</p> <p>The Executive Team may find it helpful to use this Action Plan as a base to develop a communications strategy, agreeing</p>	<p>7</p>		<p>Within 6 months</p>



		who will share updates, how frequently updates will be shared and the supporting narrative that will sit alongside progress updates. We recommend that communications convey both the successes and also where improvements still need to be made - this is a key aspect of becoming more visible and transparent about the work the Council is doing.			
Internal [14]	Conduct a policy and procedure review*	EDI (and all other people-related policies and procedures) should ideally be reviewed every 1-2 years to ensure they are up to date, fit for purpose and in line with best practice. An EDI-focused review aims to address any words, phrases, tonality or format that could (indirectly or directly) discriminate against particular individuals/groups. We would recommend that grievance and disciplinary policies and processes that underpin the Council's approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation are subject to review with an EDI lens. As per Action 13, the Council should share any updates to policies and/or procedures with staff as part of any agreed communications strategy.	5, 6		Within 12 months



Monitoring Progress

The PSED requires the Council to set and publish equity/equality objectives every four years. Every four years, the Council should arrive at a point in which it has a clear understanding of progress that has been made against its previous objectives, where further work is still needed and, where relevant, if there are emerging needs for different groups not previously considered. This requires the Council to be intentional and committed to fairness and equity on a consistent basis, embedding it at the heart of its duties.

As a way of bridging this gap, we recommend that the Council reviews the agreed Action Plan after a 12 month period to measure progress. The outcome of the review should form the basis of the following year's Action Plan. To maintain a high standard of accountability, it is important that, if actions are rolled over, the Council carefully considers and makes note of why particular actions were not met and what needs to be done differently the following year to achieve progress. In order to build trust among the workforce and local population, we highly recommend that the Council shares the findings of its review and outlines its next steps.

There are several other ways to monitor progress – below we have included a high level overview of three methods we have found to be particularly effective when conducting similar work. We have presented these not as prescriptive recommendations of what the Council *should* do, but to highlight a number of options it has available to it when seeking to monitor progress.

Objectives and Key Results (OKR)

The Council may find it helpful to view the Action Plan through an OKR lens. The Objectives (in this case, the Action Plan's Recommendations) are simply what the Council wants to achieve, and the Key Results are how the Council will get there. If adopting this approach, the Council may wish to develop an OKR table to sit alongside the Action Plan. We suggest that a maximum of 3 Key Results are devised for each Objective to ensure it is realistic and achievable within one year.

We have previously helped the Greater London Authority to develop OKR's following a review; we focused on breaking down recommendations into small tasks, defining what success looks like for each Objective, establishing prerequisites or resources needed to achieve them, as well as identifying risks and solutions. We would be happy to discuss this with West Berkshire Council once the Action Plan has been agreed by all relevant stakeholders.



Maturity Model

A Maturity Model is a tool used by organisations to assess what 'stage' of their EDI journey they are at. It typically comprises of 3–5 phases, and for Council's this will usually range from a position characterised by significant regulatory risks to being viewed as an innovative leader for inclusion. TEG has previously developed Maturity Models for other Councils, which look at a range of key indicators such as workforce representation, organisational culture, decision making and service delivery. This can be particularly useful for Council's that are at significant risk of non-compliance with equalities legislation, providing a detailed understanding of how to meet requirements and then move beyond this to create a more impactful approach to EDI.

LGA: Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) 2021

The Local Government Association (LGA) produced the [EFLG](#) to help Council's deliver inclusive services, be representative of their local population, ensure equity of opportunity for their staff and meet/exceed PSED requirements. The EFLG takes into account the fact that different Council's are at different stages and looks at four 'modules' – all of which are pertinent to West Berkshire Council's aims and desired outcomes.

The modules outlined within the Framework are:

- Understanding and working with your communities;
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment;
- Responsive services and customer care; and,
- Diverse and engaged workforce.

Within each of these, the Council can fall into one of three categories: Developing, Achieving, or Excellent. The LGA have provided clear indicators for each of these to help Council's assess their current position and what actions they need to take to move to the next category. This approach is similar to that of the Maturity Model mentioned above, but is not specific to West Berkshire's local context. The Council may wish to consider the LGA's EFLG in conjunction with its own EDI Framework to get a more holistic view of what further steps it may wish to take, while recognising that there is no substitute for the localised assessment of EDI priorities. As such, the Council should always consider external guidance through the lens of the local lived experiences.



Glossary

Key Term	Definition
EDI	Equity/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EFLG	Equality Framework for Local Government
EqIA	Equality Impact Assessment
ERG	Employee Resource Group
LGA	Local Government Association
OKR	Objectives and Key Results
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty

Appendix A: Associated policies/strategies

Policy/Strategy	Context
Gender Pay Gap Data	The Council is legally required to report on Gender Pay Gap data each year.
Maternity Procedure [HRMAT] V.2.3 Nov 2019	This procedure sets out the entitlements and responsibilities that apply to employees who are pregnant and give birth.
Menopause Policy [HRMP] V.1 Sept 2020	The purpose of this policy is to raise awareness, encourage open conversation and support workers to continue to be effective in their jobs while experiencing menopause.
Sickness Absence – Reporting and Management Policy, Procedure and Guidance [HRMSA1] V.1.9 Aug 2022	The purpose of this policy is to support the effective reporting, recording and management of sickness absence to reduce its impact on service delivery and provide appropriate support to employees.
Shared Parental Leave Policy [HRSPLP] V.1 March 2015	The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will handle the discretionary aspects of Shared Parental Leave and Pay.
Transgender Policy [TRPV1] V.1 Sept 2018	The purpose of this policy is to set out the Council's commitment to ensuring that transgender people are treated with dignity and are not unlawfully discriminated against or disadvantaged in the workplace.
Draft Council Strategy 2023–2027 Forward Together [For Consultation Jan 2023]	A Council Strategy is a business planning document that sets out future priorities and planned outcomes. A new Strategy is produced every four years.
Capability Procedure [WBCPCR] V.4 Dec 2022	This procedure is to be used to manage performance that falls below the required standard due to 'lack of aptitude, skill or ability'.
Disciplinary Procedure [HR Disc] V.4 Dec 2022	The Disciplinary Procedure is designed to help and encourage employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct.
Equality in Employment Policy [No ref given] V.3 March 2016	The purpose of this policy is to set out West Berkshire Council's approach to diversity and equality in employment.



Equality Policy [No ref given] V.1 Jan 2018	The purpose of this Policy is to set out West Berkshire Council's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity.
Reasonable Adjustments for Staff with Disabilities Flow Chart [No ref given] V.3 May 2016	A Corporate Process for Accessing Funding in the application of reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities.

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West Berkshire Council
Equity Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE

March 2023

Updated November 2023 (Section 3)

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	
Completed By	
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that</p>	

supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.

Alternatives considered / rejected

Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts to be considered as best practice to be mindful of wider community needs within West Berkshire

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Displaced communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Care experienced people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The Armed Forces Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	

Appendix G: Action Plan

Taking the Vision, Strategic Principles and the Objectives into account, we have devised a 12-month Action Plan for the Council. This plan seeks to build on each of these areas to help the Council move from a theoretical understanding to practical implementation. Our recommendations (both internal and external) are presented using a RAG system to indicate the timescales within which we recommend West Berkshire Council should implement the suggested improvements:

Red (Short-term) - To be completed within the next 3 months;

Amber (Medium-term) - To be completed within the next 6 months;

Green (Long-term) - to be completed within the next 12 months.

In developing this Action Plan, we have produced a set of recommendations that take into account the limited resources available in the Council. While we recommend that the Council pursues an ambitious approach to become community leaders for inclusion in the future, it is important that the actions set out in this 12 month plan focus on enabling the Council to meet the PSED.

The colour coding system is not used to indicate level of importance - all activities set out in this Action Plan should be considered priority areas of focus for the next year. The actions are colour coded to reflect the fact that some of the actions can be taken more quickly than others. There are a number of actions which TEG can support the Council to achieve, denoted by an asterisk (*), and others that we believe the Council should lead.

We have left the 'Suggested Responsibility' column blank to provide the Council with the opportunity to agree the most appropriate department for each action to sit with. We strongly recommend that this forms part of the stakeholder testing and decision-making process as a key way of building accountability for the Action Plan's success.

Focus	Recommendation	Justification	Associated Objectives	Suggested Responsibility	Timeframe
External [1]	Identify (and build an approach to engage with) local underrepresented community groups / networks	<p>Several respondents indicated to us that the Council's community engagement has been limited and narrow in approach thus far. There was a general sentiment that the Council has not made the most of the opportunity to build relationships with the wide variety of community networks in the local population.</p> <p>We recommend that the Council particularly considers how best to engage with the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBT+ Communities • GRT communities • Disability networks • Young mums • Carers • Armed Forces and Veterans 	2, 3, 4	Equalities Officer BCT Team Public Health Early Years Adult social Care	<p>Identification of groups / networks within 3 months</p> <p>Engagement strategy built and commenced within 6 months</p>
External [2]	Establish an external EDI comms strategy	An EDI communications strategy aims to simplify the approach to sharing EDI updates and plans with stakeholders (in this case, residents and partners). This will help to ensure that the Council has a consistent and joined-up approach to its external messaging. Regular communications should aid the Council in: conveying the importance	1, 3	Comms Team Equalities Officer	Within 12 months

		<p>of EDI, raising awareness of future plans, and empowering local communities to drive positive change.</p> <p>The types of information the Council wishes to share is to be agreed internally, but it may be helpful to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events that the Council is celebrating; • Actions the Council has taken or plans to take to embed EDI in its wider strategy; • The positive work of ERGs within the Council; • EDI statements from the Executive Team; • Learnings from EDI training; • Updates to processes that will help to make West Berkshire a more inclusive place to live and work. <p>It is imperative to ensure that an inclusive approach to external communications is at the heart of any agreed strategy (particularly ensuring that the method of communication does not create or exacerbate digital exclusion, and considers accessibility). Conducting a light-touch EqIA here may help the Council to mitigate against any equalities risks for particular groups.</p>			
<p>External [3]</p>	<p>Seek to understand the barriers to standing for local election for underrepresented groups</p>	<p>The Council should seek to be representative of the local population it serves. Where particular groups appear to be standing in low numbers, we advise that the Council explores the barriers (and interventions required to overcome them) through continuous engagement. It can also help to consider if there is overrepresentation</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Equalities Officer</p>	<p>Within 12 months</p>

		<p>from particular demographics in order to consider a) do those groups have access to additional resources and what can be done to redress the balance; b) what is positive about their experience and whether this be retained / replicated; c) how can those from demographics that are well represented or overrepresented be engaged to mitigate this by representing others?</p> <p>This process should result in an increased awareness of the lived experiences of marginalised communities, and feeds into the 'Everyone is understood' Strategic Principle.</p>		Democratic Services	
External [4]	Review commissioned services (such as Educafe) to understand what worked and how to replicate the success/expand the service	<p>We recognise that the Council is facing budgetary constraints. This highlights the need to strategically evaluate the success of previously commissioned services (particularly of Educafe) to replicate success and ensure any future spending is driven by a sense of 'what works'.</p> <p>Following review, the Council should seek to identify how the approach can be replicated or expanded. There is a need to consider whether such services can also be made available outside of main hubs such as Newbury, so as to allow for further rural integration (perhaps through the use of mobile units).</p>	4	Procurement – all commissioned Equalities Officer - Educafe	Ongoing
External [5]	Consider the feasibility of fortnightly 'community transport' days whereby those living rurally are provided with	According to the EDI Needs Assessment, 36% of residents live in rural areas and small settlements in West Berkshire. Inadequate and expensive transportation was repeatedly mentioned as a barrier for rural residents. Recognising that the Council can only do so much within one year, we suggest that fortnightly 'community transport'	2	Transport	Within 12 months

	free travel into the main social hubs	<p>days, especially where these are aligned with particular social/celebration events, are trialled.</p> <p>We recommend this is done for a period of 3 months initially to see whether the activity has achieved its desired aim of rural integration and community building. Failing this, the Council should seek to explore additional barriers.</p> <p>While ideally both Action 4 and 5 would be implemented, Action 5 is of increased importance in the absence of Action 4.</p>			
External / Internal [6]	Sign up to the Disability Confident Scheme	Our engagement with staff, residents and partners revealed a general sentiment that disability is not treated as a priority for the Council. The Disability Confident Scheme's tiered approach allows for clear direction and progression metrics to create a more intentional approach to disability inclusion.	2, 3, 4	Already in place and managed by HR	Within 3 months
External / Internal [7]	Identify an EDI calendar to roll out across the Council	An EDI Calendar sets out awareness days, months and events for the year. We recommend that the Council adopts the use of an existing calendar and shares this internally to raise awareness and promote education. Externally, we recommend that the Council shares community posts about the events contained in the Calendar to promote community inclusion.	4, 8	Equalities Officer for external work supported by Staff EF and Comms Team. HR could take responsibility for the internal objective but	Within 6 months

				have no dedicated resource to do this at present.	
External / Internal [8]	Review the Council's approach to EqIAs and identify areas for improvement*	<p>EqIA's help to ensure that all new policies and procedures are designed with inclusion at their core and that any potential adverse effects can be accounted for and mitigated. Whilst the Council is not legally obligated under the PSED to conduct EqIA's, they can help to demonstrate compliance. We strongly recommend that a consistent and holistic structure around conducting these is agreed within the Council, ensuring all stakeholders responsible for conducting them are informed of the why, the how and the when.</p> <p>Based on the findings of TEG's engagement process, the EDI Needs Assessment, and other recent legislative changes, the Council should consider adding in additional groups to the EqIA process.</p>	1, 5, 6	Legal Equalities Officer	Within 6 months
External / Internal [9]	Build a guidance document for community officers to work more collaboratively when engaging in rural outreach activities	We are aware that the Council (alongside Voluntary and Community Sector partners) have already made positive strides to engage with various rural communities, presenting a strong opportunity to build on the work that has been done to date. We recommend that a guidance document is produced and shared with those engaging in outreach to ensure a standardised approach to sign-posting and outreach methods. The guidance should also seek to encourage the regular sharing of information between outreach officers to ensure an informed approach on 'what works'.	7	Equalities Officer	Within 6 months

Internal [10]	Develop a specific 'Reasonable Adjustments' policy*	<p>Whilst the Council has a Reasonable Adjustments Flow Chart to provide guidance on access to funding, not all staff who could benefit from reasonable adjustments may be aware that they are entitled to them. Creating a policy will help to ensure that all staff who require adjustments due to a disability are informed about what the process is and what support they are entitled to.</p> <p>Furthermore, a policy will provide assurance to staff that, even if they do not want/need adjustments due to a disability at present, they will be able to access them in the future should this change over time. It is crucial that the Council is aware that insufficient understanding and/or application of this process could result in a type of disability discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. In an effort to increase awareness, the Council may wish to first engage in training to better understand reasonable adjustment processes.</p>	6, 8	Already in place and managed by HR	Within 3 months
Internal [11]	Develop a training programme to promote EDI awareness*	<p>Throughout our engagement process, we identified an acute need to improve understanding of particular characteristics, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodiversity (Neurodiversity can, in many circumstances, fall within the definition of disability under The Equality Act); • Disability; and, • GRT communities. 	7, 8	Some aspects are already in place and are led by HR using the Corporate Training budget. An offer to cover the neurodiversity training	Senior Leadership and Directorate Leads within 3 months

		<p>We recommend that this training is first conducted with senior leaders to ensure those directing and delivering on the key aspects of the Council Strategy are equipped with the knowledge, skills and encouragement to embody EDI in their day-to-day responsibilities.</p> <p>We also recommend that EDI training is followed up with a reflection session for attendees to discuss what they have learned, how it can positively impact the Council's priorities and also how the learnings can be further disseminated throughout the workforce.</p>	<p>required has been made by a company called Cognassist. Training is £10K and budget can be allocated from the Corporate Training budget. Any additional training could also be procured through use of the corporate training budget if budget currently put on hold is allowed to be used for this purpose. There is also a new LMS being implemented and at date of writing it is unknown what EDI training is available to</p>	<p>Expansion of the EDI Awareness training to managers within 6 months</p>
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				support this objective.	
Internal [12]	Establish an approach to engaging with Employee Resource Groups (ERG)*	<p>ERGs bring lived experience and, when supported, can help to foster a sense of collective responsibility, as per Strategic Principle 3. We understand that there are a number of ERGs already set up at the Council, but that there is not a structured approach to engaging with them.</p> <p>We suggest that Executive Directors or other relevant senior leaders within the Council convene to agree an approach to this. The Council should seek to establish OKR's with each ERG, understand how frequently they gather (and whether this is in their lunch breaks or in paid time), and what level of engagement they would like with senior leaders.</p> <p>Once the above has been established, we recommend that an Executive Sponsor is agreed for each ERG, and that this individual will be responsible for attending meetings (frequency as per the group's desire) and taking suggestions/recommendations to other senior</p>	7, 8	<p>Already a Staff Equalities Forum in place which is managed by the Equalities Officer.</p> <p>Women's Network and Managers' Networks (about to start) are led by the Wellbeing Business Partner. This post is currently an FTC to the 31st March</p>	Within 6 months

leaders where budget can be discussed and agreed to support initiatives.

2024. In order to ensure this objective is met (and those lead by HR) it is suggested that a 0.5FTE K/J grade post is created as an Employee Engagement and Equalities post that would sit in HR and manage all of the employee EDI responsibilities. Without this resource these objectives cannot be delivered. It should be noted that as of the 1st April 2024 there will be 0.2FTE of the current K Grade Equalities Officer post

				that will be vacant and could contribute to the building of the new 0.5FTE post.	
Internal [13]	Establish an internal EDI Communications strategy*	<p>Much like an external EDI Communications strategy, an internal strategy is about building a sense of collective responsibility and ensuring clarity around EDI plans. For an internal strategy, greater focus should be placed on establishing accountability metrics, such as who will own the action and when progress is expected to be achieved.</p> <p>The Executive Team may find it helpful to use this Action Plan as a base to develop a communications strategy, agreeing who will share updates, how frequently updates will be shared and the supporting narrative that will sit alongside progress updates. We recommend that communications convey both the successes and also where improvements still need to be made - this is a key aspect of becoming more visible and transparent about the work the Council is doing.</p>	7	Equalities Officer or new Employee Engagement post.	Within 6 months
Internal [14]	Conduct a policy and procedure review*	EDI (and all other people-related policies and procedures) should ideally be reviewed every 1-2 years to ensure they are up to date, fit for purpose and in line with best practice. An EDI-focused review aims to address any words, phrases, tonality or format that could (indirectly or directly) discriminate against particular	5, 6	A review action plan for all people related policies is currently being	Within 12 months

		<p>individuals/groups. We would recommend that grievance and disciplinary policies and processes that underpin the Council's approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation are subject to review with an EDI lens. As per Action 13, the Council should share any updates to policies and/or procedures with staff as part of any agreed communications strategy.</p>		<p>drawn up. However the HR team has other priorities with the implementation of a new HR and Payroll System so reviews will only be possible without additional resource when time allows. It is intended this will however be over the next 12 months.</p>	
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Appendix A: Associated policies/strategies

Policy/Strategy	Context	Comments
Gender Pay Gap Data	The Council is legally required to report on Gender Pay Gap data each year.	Completed by HR.
Maternity Procedure [HRMAT] V.2.3 Nov 2019	This procedure sets out the entitlements and responsibilities that apply to employees who are pregnant and give birth.	No change
Menopause Policy [HRMP] V.1 Sept 2020	The purpose of this policy is to raise awareness, encourage open conversation and support workers to continue to be effective in their jobs while experiencing menopause.	Also a Menopause Awareness group is in place and is led by the current Employee Wellbeing Business Partner.
Sickness Absence – Reporting and Management Policy, Procedure and Guidance [HRMSA1] V.1.9 Aug 2022	The purpose of this policy is to support the effective reporting, recording and management of sickness absence to reduce its impact on service delivery and provide appropriate support to employees.	Subject to review in 2023
Shared Parental Leave Policy [HRSPLP] V.1 March 2015	The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will handle the discretionary aspects of Shared Parental Leave and Pay.	No change
Transgender Policy [TRPV1] V.1 Sept 2018	The purpose of this policy is to set out the Council’s commitment to ensuring that transgender people are treated with dignity and are not unlawfully discriminated against or disadvantaged in the workplace.	No change at present
Draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 Forward Together [For Consultation Jan 2023]	A Council Strategy is a business planning document that sets out future priorities and planned outcomes. A new Strategy is produced every four years.	Currently subject to review in 2023.
Capability Procedure [WBCPCR] V.4 Dec 2022	This procedure is to be used to manage performance that falls below the required	Subject to review in 2023

	standard due to 'lack of aptitude, skill or ability'.	
Disciplinary Procedure [HR Disc] V.4 Dec 2022	The Disciplinary Procedure is designed to help and encourage employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct.	Subject to review in 2023
Equality in Employment Policy [No ref given] V.3 March 2016	The purpose of this policy is to set out West Berkshire Council's approach to diversity and equality in employment.	Subject to review but will be based on resource availability
Equality Policy [No ref given] V.1 Jan 2018	The purpose of this Policy is to set out West Berkshire Council's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity.	Subject to review but will be based on resource availability
Reasonable Adjustments for Staff with Disabilities Flow Chart [No ref given] V.3 May 2016	A Corporate Process for Accessing Funding in the application of reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities.	New policy and procedure implemented in 2022.

2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	14 December 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	
Report Author:	Melanie Ellis
Forward Plan Ref:	

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets. This report is Quarter Two for the 2023/24 financial year. The report is highlighting the financial position at each quarter of the financial year and impact on the Council's General Fund position. This allows the Executive and Scrutiny Commission to consider the implications and the actions being taken to mitigate and manage the position.
- 1.2 The Council has been forecasting a significant overspend across many services, especially in the People Directorate. This is due to increasing demand on services, continued inflationary cost pressures and additional staffing costs through the use of agency workers.
- 1.3 To mitigate the financial pressures, the Council implemented measures from July 2023 to provide greater oversight and scrutiny of financial decisions and financial commitments, as well as additional approval mechanisms for staffing and agency arrangements across the Council. These measures have started to see results; the overspend forecast position has begun to stabilise and the other reviews being undertaken are expected to realise a reduction compared to the Quarter One forecast of £3m.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the £3.3m forecast overspend, a reduction of £3m from Quarter One.
- 2.2 To note the implementation of measures included in the report around recruitment, staffing and agency.
- 2.3 To note the continuation of Financial Review Panel (FRP) meeting weekly to ensure the spending limits are being adhered to.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary			
Financial:	<p>The forecast position at Q2 of a £3.3m overspend has significant financial implications, though these have improved compared to Q1. The General Fund is at £7.2m, with a minimum recommended level of £7m. If the £3.3m overspend remains at year end, it would leave a General Fund of £3.9m. This is a very low level of general fund balance and actions in place will be closely monitored to ensure that the in-year financial position improves.</p> <p>The minimum level of general fund balance recommended by the s151 officer is £7m and this would put the Council at significantly below this for future budget setting; this would mean an increase in future year's budget savings over and above initial forecasts for 2024-25 to replenish the level of reserves in the future. The 2024-25 budget assumptions currently include a forecast contribution to reserves of £1m.</p>			
Human Resource:	The FRP (Financial Review Panel) implications have been reviewed by Service Lead (HR) as a member of the panel.			
Legal:	The FRP (Financial Review Panel) implications have been reviewed by the Monitoring Officer.			
Risk Management:	Measures have been included in the report to provide greater levels of scrutiny on much lower levels of expenditure and recruitment costs.			
Property:	Review of assets to be undertaken with a view to possible sales that could be utilised for reduced capital financing costs and / or funding for a range of transformational activity across the Council to reduce costs.			
Policy:	None directly			
	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?		y		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		y		The proposal aims to continue to protect those characteristics
Environmental Impact:		y		Unlikely to have any long term environmental impact.
Health Impact:		y		
ICT Impact:		y		N/A
Digital Services Impact:		y		N/A
Council Strategy Priorities:			y	The proposal could reduce spend on some areas of council priority.
Core Business:		y		
Data Impact:				No impact
Consultation and Engagement:	Service Directors, Executive Directors.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 The Quarter Two forecast is showing a substantial financial pressure for the Council. Primarily driven through cost pressures in the People directorate, with growing demand for social care services, additional staffing costs through the use of agency staff and

inflationary pressures, the People directorate alone is forecasting an overspend in excess of £6.3m, an increase of £500k from last quarter. There are other financial pressures in the Place directorate Development and Regulation Service, in planning services, unachieved income and delayed additional planning income charges via Government changes leading to a forecast overspend of £0.6m.

4.2 The General Fund reserve is currently at £7.2m (per the 2022/23 Financial Statements), which is only £0.2m above the S151 officer's minimum recommended level, as set out in the 2023/24 budget papers. As a result, the Council cannot end 2023/24 with a significant overspend, without reserves being depleted far below the recommended minimum level.

4.3 There have been a large number of Councils in recent weeks and months highlighting significant financial pressures for the 2023/24 financial year. Though it is difficult to analyse every Council's in year position due to timing of respective committees across the country, as at early August through to October 2023, the following Councils have reported significant in year financial difficulties with mention of a s114 report or exceptional financial support;

- Medway Council
- Leeds City Council
- Hastings BC
- Guildford BC
- Shropshire Council
- Brighton & Hove
- Southampton Council
- Kent County Council
- Bradford Council
- Kirklees Council
- Hampshire County Council

4.4 To reduce the financial pressure and forecasts, the Council has taken rapid pro-active steps to reduce the overspend position from July 2023, these steps include:

- Greater scrutiny and approval of expenditure over £1,000
- Greater scrutiny and approval of recruitment activity and agency expenditure
- Finance led reviews on reviewing accruals policies and capital financial expenditure
- Review of action plans by overspending services to provide further mitigations to reduce overspends
- Review of the flexible use of capital receipts and seek to raise funding through capital receipts to fund eligible transformation spend
- Greater in year budget monitoring review of overspending services

- 4.5 Some of the mitigations may have an impact on service delivery, though it is expected that these will be kept to a minimum as posts and expenditure that affect the most vulnerable are being prioritised and the Council is continuing to operate all services.
- 4.6 The implication of an overspend in excess of £0.2m in 2023/24, would be to take the general fund reserve below the s151 officer's minimum level. In order to replenish the general fund reserve, greater levels of savings than currently forecast for 2024/25 would be required, or Full Council would need to consider accepting a budget with even greater risk for future financial years with lower than recommended reserves.
- 4.7 If the Council was to significantly overspend it would need to consider what options are available for exceptional financial support. Most likely, the Council would need to formally approach the Government for a capitalisation directive, though this is looking less likely as an option due to the improvement in the overall Quarter Two forecast, following the rapid deployment of actions in the summer 2023, compared to the Quarter One forecast for 2023/24. A capitalisation directive would allow the Government to provide the Council with one off funding as capital, which could be used to fund revenue. To enable this, the Government would require a form of intervention through a formal review of the Council as a likely minimum. Other Councils have been provided with this funding by the Government in recent years.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exceptional-financial-support-for-local-authorities-capitalisation-directions>

This would provide short term financial relief, if approved, though the Council would remain with a challenging longer term financial position that would require additional savings, alongside the additional cost of repaying the capitalisation directive. At present, the Council is not proposing to request a capitalisation directive, but this cannot be ruled out in the current financial year until the in-year financial position is brought down to much closer to a break even position.

- 4.8 If in the longer term the financial pressure is not reduced, the Council's s151 Officer would need to consider issuing a section 114 notice; this is not being considered in the short term due to the mitigations being put in place at present in the 2023-24 financial year to mitigate the in year pressure. Any formal Section 114 notice would flow from the section of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 states:

“The chief finance officer of a relevant authority shall make a report under this section if it appears to him that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure”

- 4.9 The notice would need to go to Full Council who would have to respond within 21 days on what steps it will take. The issuance of a section 114 notice must be subject to consultation with the Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer. This still remains a rare issuance in Local Government.
- 4.10 The background to the financial position of the Council is that the Council has historically had low levels of reserves, at approximately half of the average of similar Councils. The Council has a track record of strong financial control and stewardship, and though (the Covid-19 pandemic excepted) reserves have remained comparatively low, the Council

2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two

has achieved financial balance as well as delivered significant financial savings programmes. The savings and investment programme over recent years is highlighted below; on top of this, the 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved in March 2023 highlighted a savings requirement of over £11m over the next three years, heavily weighted to 2024/25 given uncertainties over future fair funding reviews – this totals £40m over a seven year period per the below. The figure for 2024/25 has increased since the MTFS was published and is forecast to be at £14m¹ due to increased demand pressures that are referenced in this report:



4.11 The Council has also commenced its Transformation programme. This programme seeks to identify longer term financial savings, but will of course highlight any shorter term opportunities to help support the Council's in year financial position.

4.12 The Quarter Two forecast is an overspend of £3.3m as summarised below:

2022/23 Directorate Summary	Net Budget	Net Income/ Expenditure	Quarter One		Quarter Two						Change from Last Quarter
			Year end forecast variance	Budget Manager Forecast Variance	Use of Earmarked Reserves	Year end forecast variance	Mitigation	Pre-agreed Transformation	New Transformation	Year end forecast variance	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
People	97,991	106,894	5,840	9,185	(238)	8,947	(1,464)	0	(1,186)	6,297	457
Place	33,733	34,399	597	515	(307)	208	0	0	(255)	(47)	(643)
Resources	12,175	12,820	24	924	(103)	821	(109)	(423)	(263)	26	2
Chief Executive	541	536	(5)	(10)	0	(10)	0	0	0	(10)	(5)
Capital Financing/Risk Mgt	14,537	14,380	(157)	(2,872)	0	(2,872)	0	0	(130)	(3,002)	(2,845)
Total	158,977	169,028	6,298	7,742	(648)	7,094	(1,574)	(423)	(1,834)	3,264	(3,034)

4.13 It is therefore vital that the Corporate Board and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) continue to reduce expenditure / increase income to reduce the forecast overspend.

¹ See Executive report to the 23rd November 2023

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.2 The 2023/24 net revenue budget of £159m was set in March 2023, using £157m revenue funding and £1.8m of reserves. During the 2023/24 budget build, inflationary pressures were identified in demand led services, but not all pressures were built into the budget, with some being held as a risk against the general reserve.
- 5.3 The Council brought in a strategy for managing the in-year financial pressures at Quarter One, where the overspend was forecast to be £6.3m. This was after some initial mitigations against pressures being seen. Since the Quarter One (Q1) forecast was made, actions have been undertaken as highlighted in the Q1 report to the Executive in September. Progress against the strategy for managing the overspend are set out below:

Action	Progress	Financial benefit
1) Implementation of a Financial Review Panel (FRP)	a) Review of all expenditure for overspending services over £1,000.	Included within Q2 forecasts.
	b) Review of all agency expenditure and incorporating all staff within the Council's Comensura ² contract.	Reduced agency staff expenditure in Comensura from £188k per week to £147k per week ³ - reduction of £2.1m over a twelve month rolling forecast if maintained.
	c) Review all recruitment activity, pausing some activity.	Included within Q2 forecasts where posts are being held vacant or delays to recruitment.
	d) Enhanced recruitment activity	Posts moved from agency to permanent staff – expect benefit from Q3
2) Review of accrual policy	Review has been complete and already included in the forecast for Q1.	Already taken into account in the Q1 forecast.
3) Review of the Council's Minimum	The Council has been provided with a report from Link (the	In year benefit of £2.87m

² Overarching provider of agency staff for WBC

³ Average of first 4 week of 23-24 vs average of 4 weeks of September (end of Q2)

Revenue Provision (MRP) policy	Council's Treasury Management advisors) that highlight a range of options for review. This will require a change of policy to MRP at Full Council ⁴ (and this will be included in the February budget papers with a request for a revision to in year treatment).	
4) Review of opportunities for asset sales	The November Executive meeting approved the sale of capital assets owned by the Council. These can be used to fund Transformational activity per the below and will also reduce capital financing costs, but will reduce investment income in future years.	See below
5) Review the flexible use of capital receipts	Initial review of activities that fit within the Government guidance for the flexible use of capital receipts total £2.3m. These are short term benefits but will benefit the in year position <i>if</i> asset sale(s) take place in 2023-24.	Up to £2.3m
6) S151 officer to discuss position with the Government (DLUHC)	Conversations have taken place and further action (for example a capitalisation request) to occur if required	n/a

5.4 The strategy will continue for the rest of the financial year, with additional focus on delivering in year savings targets for directorates through progress against action plans.

5.5 The Government will wish to consider the financial position of Councils facing significant financial pressures and in recent years have provided capitalisation directives to a small number of Councils, see the link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exceptional-financial-support-for-local-authorities-capitalisation-directions>.

In these cases, the Government have provided specific sums of funding to Councils through a capitalisation directive whereby the Council repays the Government (with additional financial costs) and the Council will be required to have a formal external assurance review on their financial position. This will then be published by the DLUHC

⁴ This review is still ongoing at the time of writing

2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two

(Department of Levelling Up and Communities) and subject to progress and updates on improvement to the Council's financial position.

- 5.6 If the mitigations included in the current forecasts, *including* a capitalisation directive if it was sought, were not to come forward and be delivered, the Council would need to consider issuing a s114 report; this is not the current proposal. Very few Councils have issued section 114 notices (Woking BC, Slough BC, Croydon and Thurrock being the most recent), and most of those have taken place where there have been significant commercial / property / company purchases with a lack of capital financing repayments, rather than from inflationary pressures. More information on the practicalities of a section 114 notice are included in this link from Woking BC <https://www.woking.gov.uk/section114> or this from Thurrock Council <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/government-intervention/section-114-notice> .

Quarter Two 2023/24

- 5.7 The Quarter Two forecast is an overspend of £3.3m, representing 2.1% of the net revenue budget. The Quarter Two forecast is after use of £0.6m of specific earmarked reserves, £1.6m service mitigations that are being worked on, and £2.3m of flexible use of capital receipts for transformational activity.

2023/24	Net Budget	Net Income/ Expenditure	Quarter Two									Change from Last Quarter
			Quarter One	Quarter Two								
			Year end forecast variance	Budget Manager Forecast Variance	Use of Earmarked Reserves	Forecast variance after Reserves	Mitigation	Pre-agreed Transformation	New Transformation	Year end forecast variance		
£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000		
Adult Social Care	62,925	64,522	791	1,777	(151)	1,626	(702)	0	(349)	575	(216)	
Children & Family Services	21,249	26,683	3,721	4,771	(87)	4,684	(179)	0	(787)	3,719	(3)	
Executive Director	370	377	7	46	0	46	0	0	(49)	(3)	(10)	
Education DSG funded	(444)	(444)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Education	10,708	12,572	1,321	2,604	0	2,604	(584)	0	0	2,020	700	
Public Health & Wellbeing	(80)	(80)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Communities & Wellbeing	3,264	3,264	0	(14)	0	(14)	0	0	0	(14)	(14)	
People	97,991	106,894	5,840	9,185	(238)	8,947	(1,464)	0	(1,186)	6,297	457	
Executive Director	213	197	(21)	(25)	0	(25)	0	0	0	(25)	(4)	
Development & Regulation	5,637	6,057	618	657	(45)	612	0	0	0	612	(5)	
Environment	27,882	28,144	0	(117)	(262)	(379)	0	0	(255)	(634)	(634)	
Place	33,733	34,399	597	515	(307)	208	0	0	(255)	(47)	(643)	
ICT	2,437	2,524	(87)	(13)	0	(13)	0	(23)	0	(36)	(36)	
Executive Director	317	275	(42)	(50)	0	(50)	0	0	0	(50)	32	
Commissioning & Procurement	448	526	(78)	79	0	79	0	(143)	(50)	(113)	(38)	
Finance & Property	1,468	1,690	201	513	(94)	419	(35)	0	(139)	245	44	
Strategy & Governance	7,505	7,702	(20)	268	(9)	259	(74)	(131)	(74)	(20)	(0)	
Transformation	0	103	103	127	0	127	0	(127)	0	0	0	
Resources	12,175	12,820	645	924	(103)	821	(109)	(423)	(263)	26	2	
Chief Executive	541	536	(5)	(10)	0	(10)	0	0	0	(10)	-5	
Capital Financing	14,851	14,694	(157)	(2,872)	0	(2,872)	0	0	(130)	(3,002)	(2,845)	
Risk Management	-314	(314)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Capital Financing/Risk Mgt	14,537	14,380	(157)	(2,872)	0	(2,872)	0	0	(130)	(3,002)	(2,845)	
Total	158,977	169,028	6,298	7,742	(648)	7,094	(1,574)	(423)	(1,834)	3,264	(3,034)	

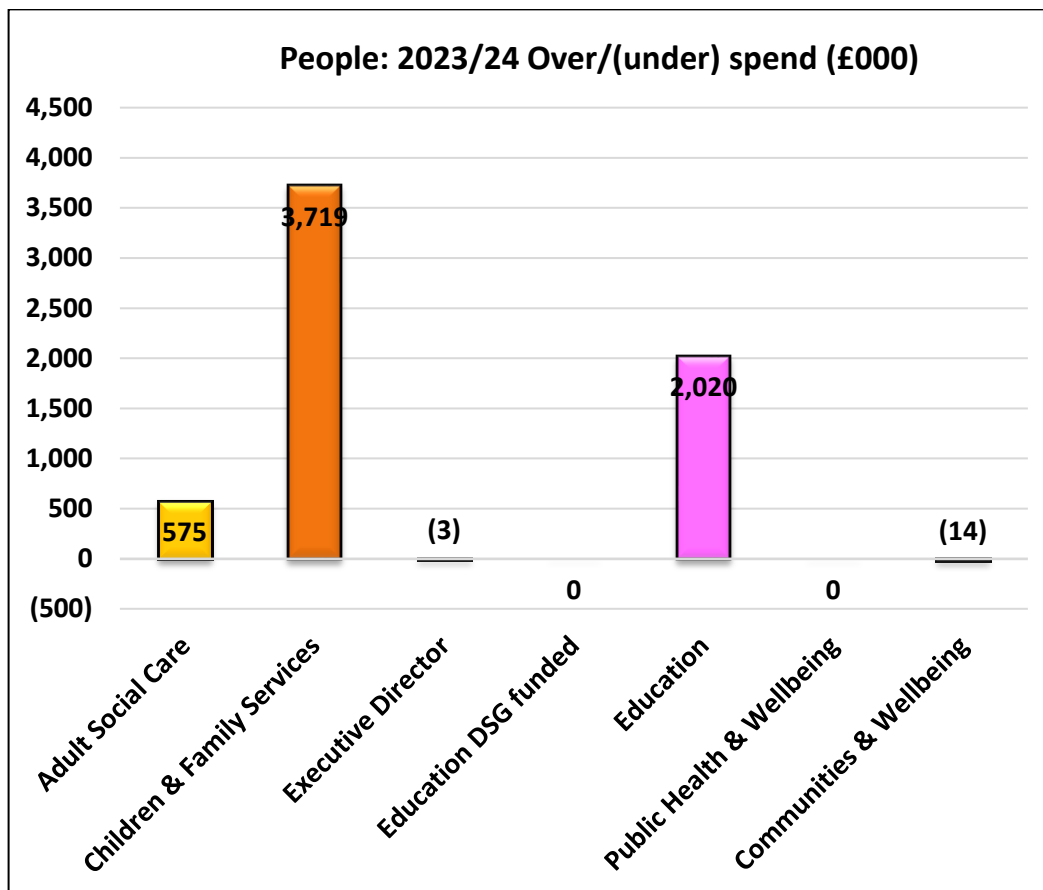
NB: Rounding differences may apply to the nearest £k.

Impact on Reserves

- 5.8 The general fund would be reduced to £3.9m if the current forecast overspend remained at year end. This is significantly below the recommended level for future budget setting as outlined in the report.

People Directorate

5.9 The People Directorate forecast is an over spend of £6.3m against a budget of £98m, representing 6.4% of budget. The overspend has increased by £457k from last quarter.



5.10 In ASC, the overspend is £0.6m, which is 0.9% of the net budget of £63m. This is after the use of Earmarked Reserves of £151k, £1.5m of mitigations currently underway and £1.2m use of transformation funding. The overspend has reduced by £0.2m since last quarter.

5.11 The modelled investment request for Adult Social Care packages for 2023/24 was reduced by £1m and held as a risk. This has led to a higher level of overspend. The overspends before mitigations are outlined below.

5.12 ASC long term services (LTS) are £2.4m over spent.

- There is an increase in the cost of care packages, due to inflation, complexities and challenges in the external workforce market. This equates to an average increase of 11% per client package since 2022/23.
- There has been lower than modelled occupancy in our own three care homes due to refurbishment and admissions restrictions resulting in clients being placed in externally commissioned beds costing more.

5.13 Short term services are £0.74m under spent due to the additional funding for Hospital Discharge and changes to some clients packages moving onto long term services.

5.14 Other overspends is ASC total £0.1m.

- There is a £0.9m overspend in our own care homes due to a shortfall of income and agency staffing requirements from recruitment difficulties.
- Underspends have arisen in Shared Lives £0.1m due to lack of carer availability and in Reablement £0.5m due to vacancies. Other underspends are in Maximising Independence, Resource Centres and staffing.

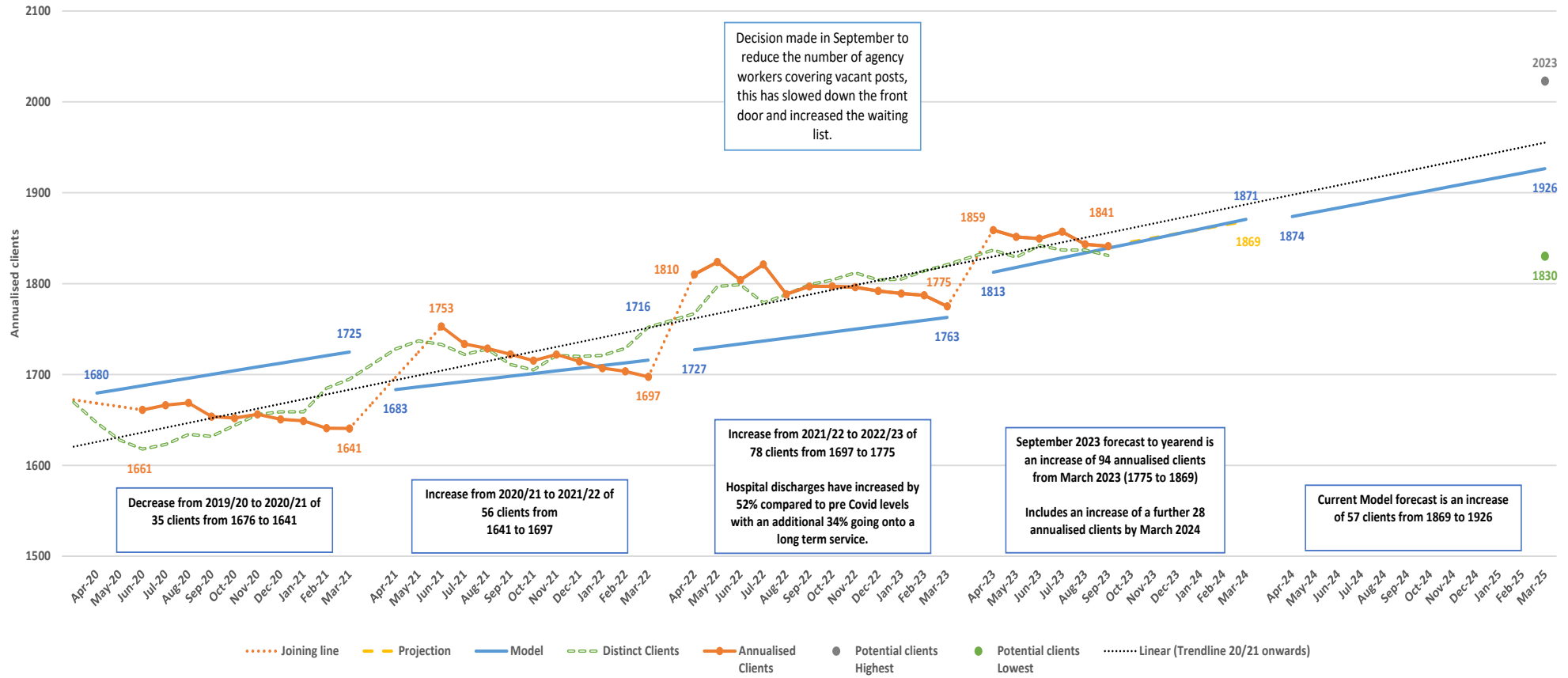
5.15 The 2023/24 savings target of £2.3m is £0.1m red, £1.3m amber and £0.9m green. The red is due to fee increases that require consultation before they can be implemented. The amber savings are on track to largely be achieved.

5.16 Mitigations of £3m are underway including in house services and additional grant funding. Other actions include a review of 2024/25 savings proposals to see if they can be started early, stopping recruitment where possible, review of agency requirements, utilisation of external funding and a review of year end accruals. The service continues to take action to suppress market demand.

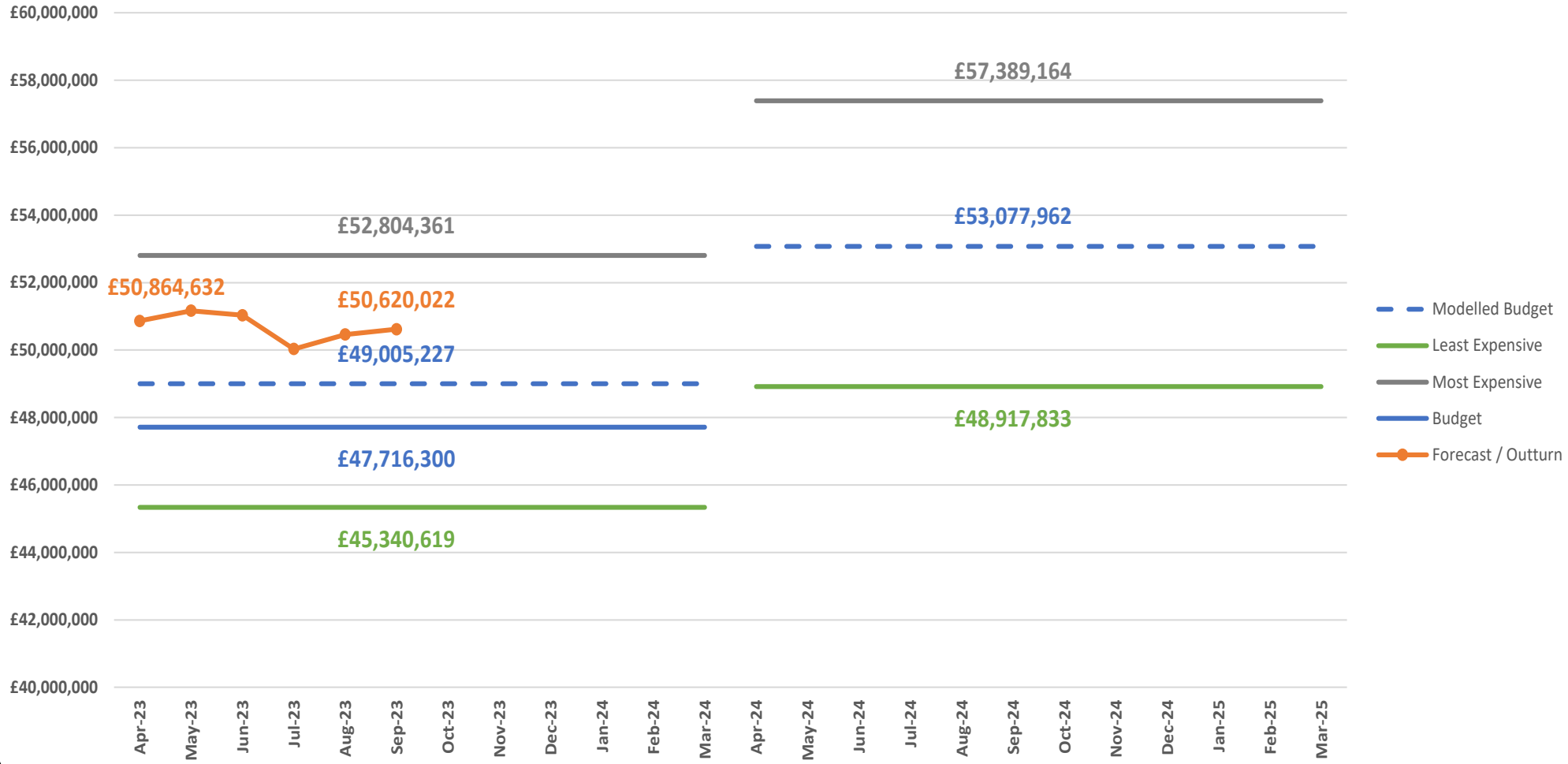
5.17 ASC are seeing an aging population as well as increased costs. The ASC Model for long term services is updated monthly, with assumptions reviewed and agreed by the ASC Financial Planning Steering group and reported at the ASC Financial Planning meeting.

2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two

Adult Social Care
Annualised client numbers for Long Term Services



LTS Net Expenditure
Model V Forecast



5.18 In CFS, the forecast is a £3.7m overspend, which is 17.5% of the net budget of £21m. This is the same as last quarter. The forecast is after the use of Earmarked Reserves of £87k, £179k mitigations and use of transformation funding of £787k.

- There is a £2.5m over spend in placements before mitigation. The children in care population has increased by 20%. This is in addition to increased complexity, mental health and emotional wellbeing needs, and provision for teenagers. There is a small cohort of young people with very high care needs requiring specialist residential provision and a national shortage of suitable residential placements.
- There has been an 83% increase in child protection plans. The Family Safeguarding teams are overspending by £1.4m due to agency costs. This has been required to cover vacancies and maternity leave and increased demand. Childcare lawyers has a £0.8m overspend due to an increase in the number of cases in court.

5.19 The 2023/24 savings target of £0.5m is £184k red, £154k amber and £196k green. The red is due to a target for not filling posts immediately upon becoming vacant not being met due to the level of demand for statutory intervention. The amber savings are for placement cost reductions which were planned at a point when a rise in the care population was not as great as now being seen.

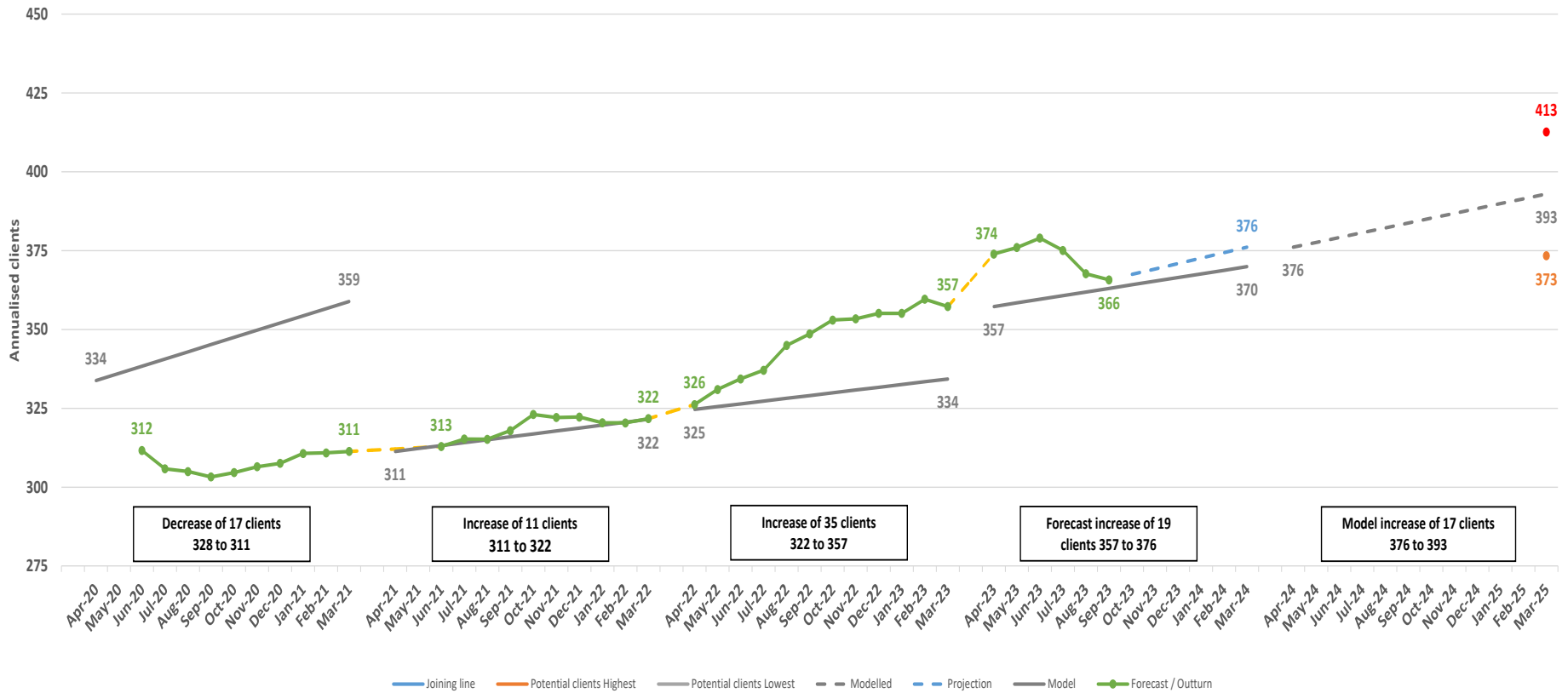
5.20 The service continue to effectively manage placements as part of the Children and Family service Accommodation & Resources Panel. There is a robust plan in place for some children to appropriately safely step down from costly residential care. Additional in house supports to foster carers (fostering hub, mental health team) will enable increasing numbers of children to live in lower cost 'In house' placements.

5.21 There is active recruitment taking place for qualified staff to fill vacancies. The national picture is one of acute shortage of social workers. The recruitment and retention package has been renewed.

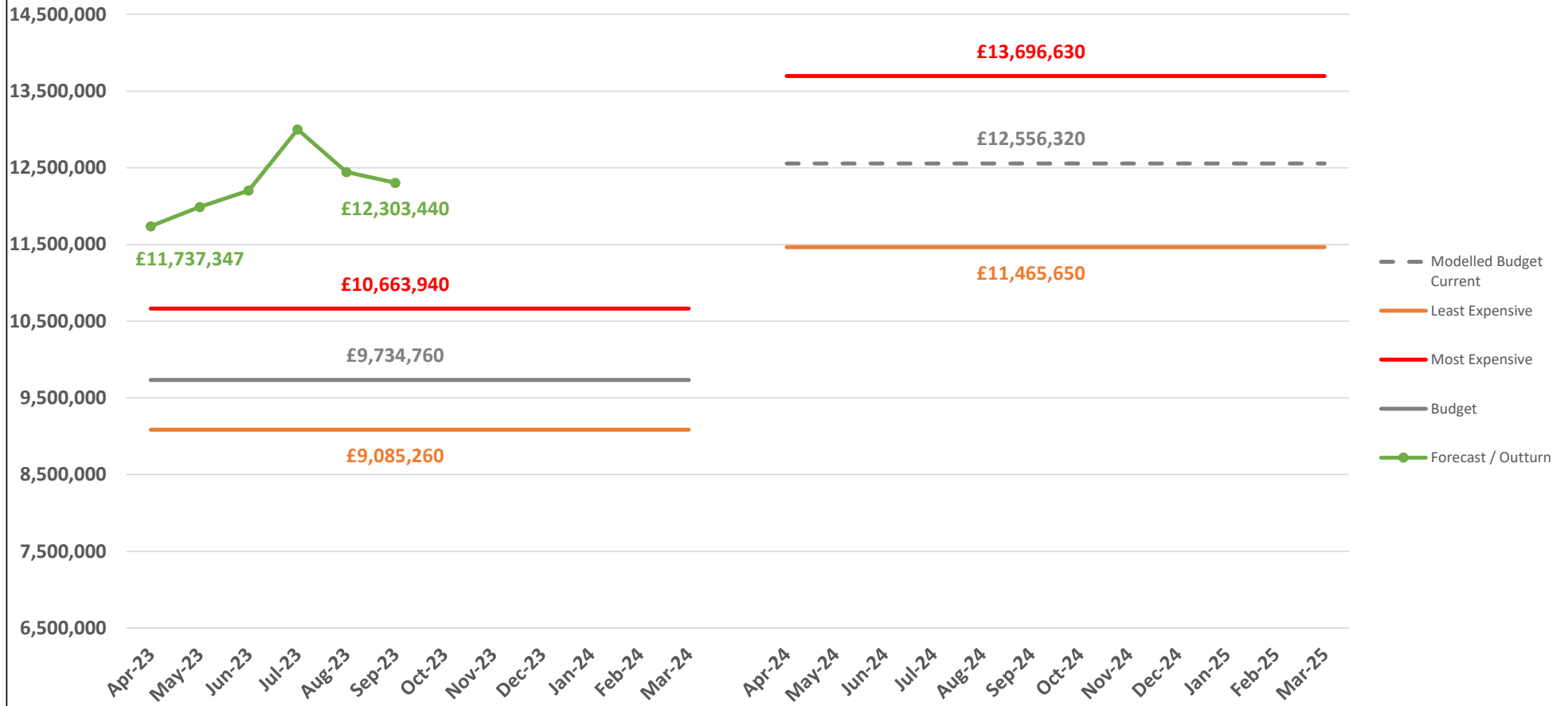
5.22 The model for placements has been refined and is updated monthly. Client numbers and net expenditure are shown in the graphs below.

2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two

Children & Family Services annualised client numbers
(includes UASC)



**Children & Family Services Net Expenditure
(includes UASC)**



5.23 Education forecast is a £2.6m overspend, which is 24% of the £10.7m budget. This has increased by £1.3m from last quarter.

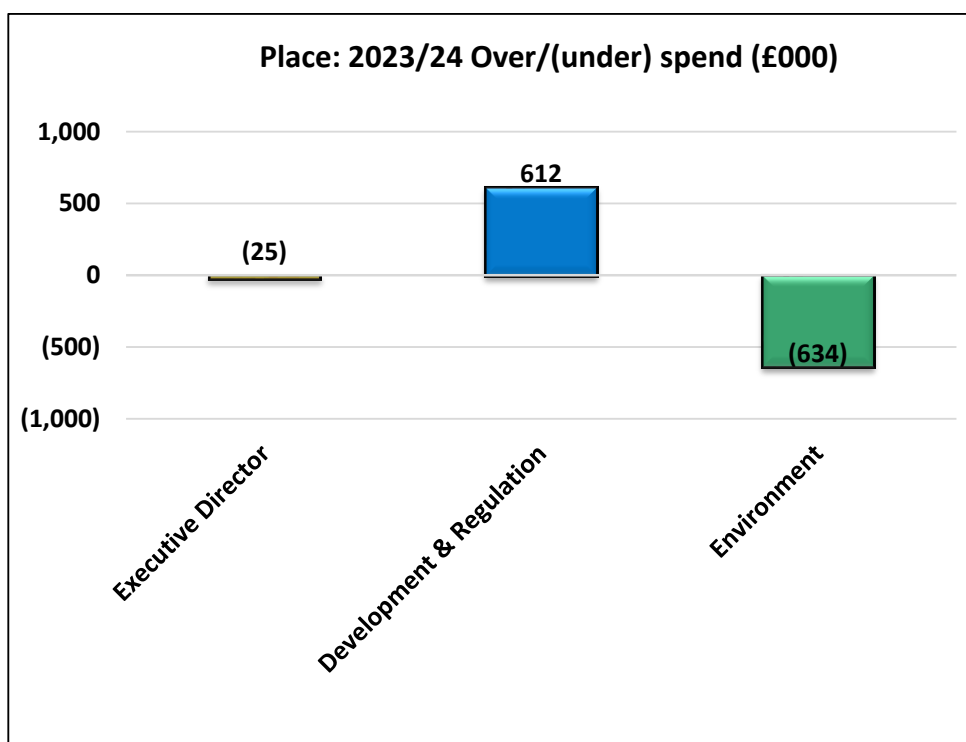
- £1.3m of the overspend is in Home to School Transport (HTST), an increase of £0.2m. The service is engaged in looking for ways to reduce HTST costs.
- £1m overspend is forecast in disability support packages residential. There have been two new high cost placements arranged at short notice. Work is being done to find longer term placements at more reasonable cost.
- Other pressures are from agency costs.

5.24 Public Health forecast is a £148k underspend which will transfer to the Public Health Reserve at year end.

5.25 Communities and Wellbeing is reporting a £14k underspend. There are pressures in library income due to Parishes not contributing, but there are savings in leisure offsetting this.

Place Directorate

5.26 The Place Directorate forecast is a £47k under spend, representing 0.14% against a budget of £34m. This is after use of reserves of £0.3m and flexible use of capital receipts for transformation of £0.3m. The overspend is entirely within Development and Regulation.



5.27 In Development and Regulation, the £0.6m overspend represents 11% of the £5.6m budget.

- There is a £0.8m pressure on Planning Application fee income, of which £0.4m is from a national fee uplift which was anticipated to start at the beginning of this financial year, but has only been introduced from the 6th December 2023⁵.
- There is a £0.3m pressure on Bio-Diversity Net Gain income, where income was expected to be generated through activity linked to developments delivering a 10% uplift in Bio-Diversity Net Gain. This is now expected to be introduced in November 2023 but there is no opportunity to generate income from the scheme.
- There are areas of underspend from staffing vacancies and reduced spend on consultants.

5.28 The 2023/24 savings target of £1.5m is £0.9m red, £0.3m amber and £0.3m green. The red is due to the income targets outlined above not being achievable. The amber savings are for fees and charges increases and holding posts vacant.

5.29 Activity to maximise income generation is being prioritised across the Planning Service. Further work is to be undertaken to review the utilisation of grant income to ensure all staff time for working on the projects is being captured, and funded from grant income.

5.30 In Environment, the forecast is an underspend of £634k. There has been a reduction in spend of £379k due to staffing vacancies, grant funding and improved income in Network Management. There is also now forecast use of transformation funding of £252k.

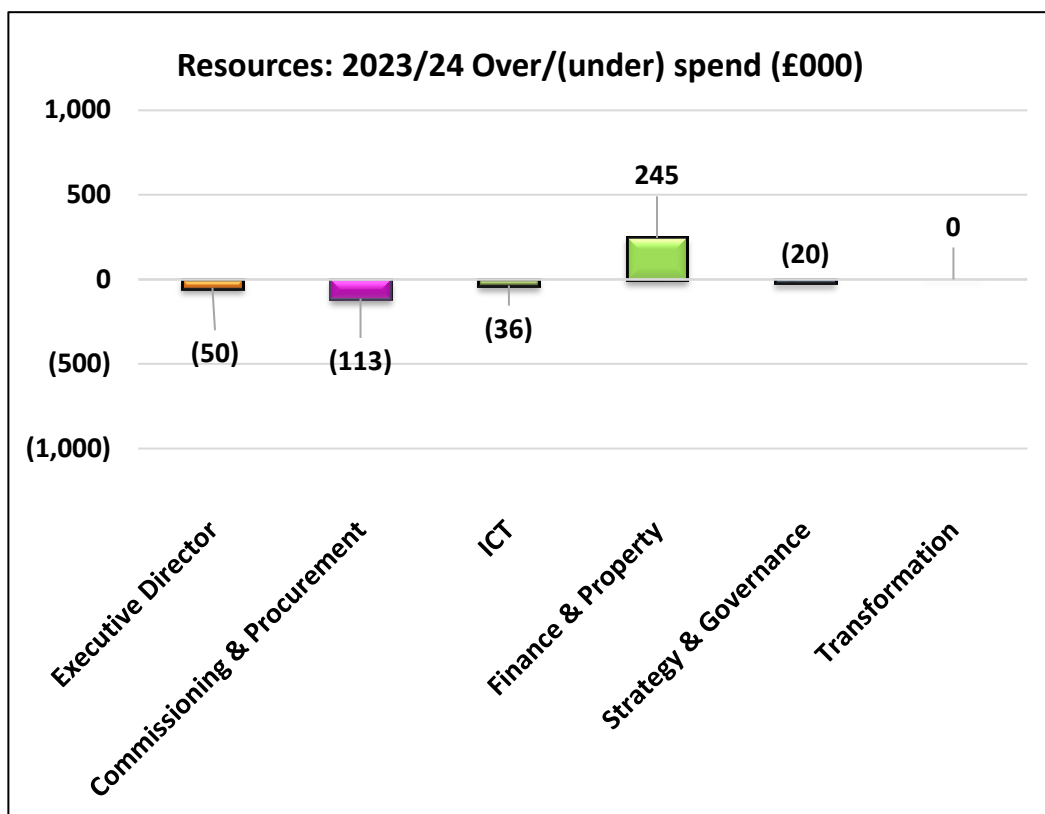
5.31 The 2023/24 savings target of £1.2m is £50k red, £30k amber and £1.1m green. The red is from biodiversity and carbon credits as legislation has not been forthcoming. The amber is for pre-application income.

Resources Directorate/Chief Executive

5.32 The Resources Directorate forecast is an overspend of £26k. This is after use of reserves of £0.1m, mitigations of £0.1m and transformation of £0.7m. The Chief Executive Service is an underspend of £10k. The combined forecast overspend of £16k represents 0.12% of the net budget of £12.7m.

5

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6553a49b371898000dd296d7/231114_Chief_Planners_Letter_Fee_Increases_23-24.pdf



5.33 In Commissioning & Procurement, the £113k surplus is largely due to additional income from the agency contract rebate, although this has reduced slightly from last quarter as a result of the reduced agency usage. Transformation funding has supported staff working on the Procurement Strategy and can further support time spent reducing agency reliance. The £350k savings are forecast as green.

5.34 In ICT is forecasting a £36k under spend. The £110k savings target is £35k red and £75k green.

5.35 In Finance and Property, the £245k overspend has arisen from unachieved savings from the accommodation review project, delayed property disposals and recruitment difficulties necessitating the use of agency. The £1.1m savings target is £96k red, £88k amber and £0.9m green.

5.36 Strategy and Governance is £20k underspent. The £420k savings programme is £101k red, £35k amber and £284k green. The red is from grant funding that is not available.

5.37 The Transformation Service is forecast online after use of transformation funding.

5.38 Mitigations for overspends include review of the Council’s Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for capital expenditure. The outcome of this review has identified a net reduction in the annual charge of £2.87m for 2023/24, which is shown in the capital financing service area. Other mitigations include reviewing vacant posts and agency arrangements, use of transformation funding and review of vacant properties.

Capital Financing and Risk Management

5.39 Capital Financing has an underspend of £3m, as described above relating to the review of the MRP provision and is subject to formal approval by Full Council.

Employee and Agency Spend

5.40 At Quarter Two, total employee spend including agency was £35.3m against a budget of £34.4m, an overspend of £0.9m. Slightly less was spent in Quarter Two than in the previous quarter. The overspend is largely as a result of the use of agency in demand led services.

5.41 The chart shows the profiled budget to 30 September 2023. It should be noted that invoices will often be received in the month after the cost is incurred, so not all costs to date will be captured. Outstanding invoices are only accrued for at year end.

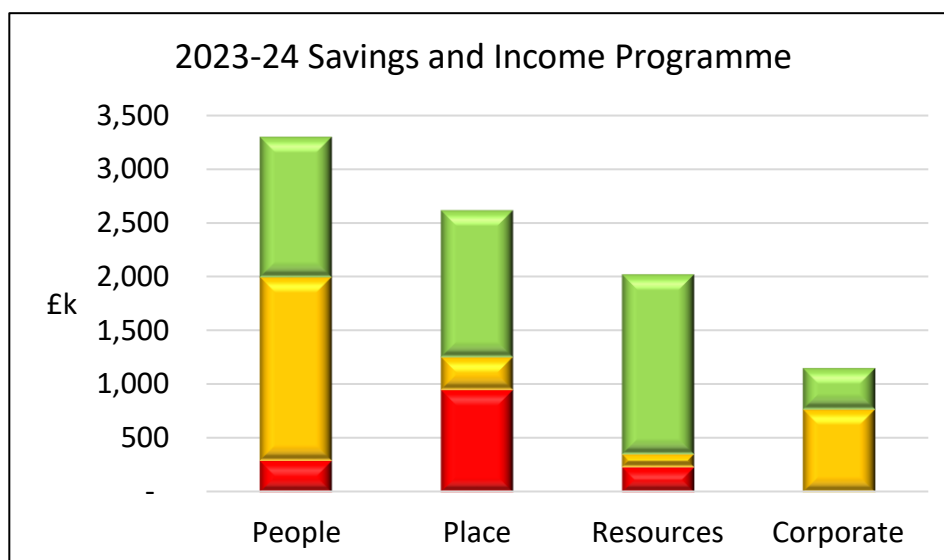
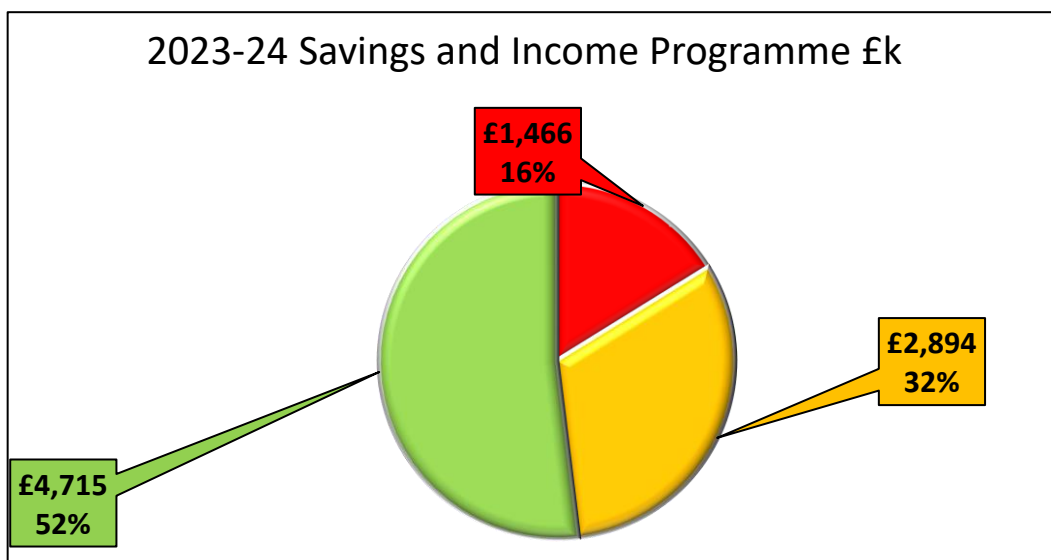
5.42 Within employee costs, agency spend to Quarter Two was £5.1m. Again, slightly less was spent in Quarter Two than in the previous quarter. Agency is 15% as a percentage of employee budgets.

5.43 The Financial Review Panel which started at the end of July, have been making progress to reduce agency spending. The impact of this will become clearer in the next quarter.

Service Summary	Employee Budget to Q2	Q1 Employee spend	Q2 Employee spend	Over/ (under) spend	% over spend	Q1 Agency spend	Q2 Agency spend	Q1 Agency spend as a % of Employee budgets	Q2 Agency spend as a % of Employee budgets
		(including agency)							
Chief Executive	247,060	141,004	120,802	14,746	6%	-	-	0%	0%
Adult Social Care	9,029,750	4,900,972	4,641,898	513,120	6%	1,101,964	913,384	24%	22%
Children & Family Services	4,891,140	2,436,995	2,790,879	336,734	7%	805,261	907,343	33%	35%
Communities & Wellbeing	1,097,740	536,901	518,228	(42,611)	-4%	2,608	2,379	0%	0%
Executive Director - People	159,705	66,534	114,593	21,422	13%	-	-	0%	0%
Education	3,356,415	1,773,103	1,680,920	97,608	3%	230,573	276,477	14%	15%
Public Health & Wellbeing	293,780	110,779	118,362	(64,639)	-22%	-	-	0%	0%
Executive Director – Place	94,535	40,748	36,906	(16,881)	-18%	-	-	0%	0%
Development & Regulation	4,920,410	2,536,378	2,514,459	130,427	3%	269,596	250,966	11%	11%
Environment	2,803,760	1,370,288	1,409,163	(24,309)	-1%	34,529	34,159	2%	2%
Commissioning & Procurement	667,610	358,700	334,953	26,043	4%	917	917	0%	0%
Executive Director - Resources	97,615	40,161	39,776	(17,678)	-18%	-	-	0%	0%
Finance & Property	2,287,380	1,197,445	1,124,448	34,513	2%	103,186	87,054	9%	8%
ICT	1,088,400	553,716	522,213	(12,471)	-1%	17,132	7,624	3%	2%
Strategy & Governance	3,314,405	1,634,094	1,631,717	(48,594)	-1%	27,957	40,147	2%	2%
Total	34,349,705	17,697,818	17,599,317	947,430	3%	2,593,723	2,518,616	15.1%	14.9%

2023/24 Savings and income generation programme

5.44 In order to meet the funding available, the 2022/23 revenue budget was built with a £9m savings and income generation programme. The programme is monitored using the RAG traffic light system. The status is shown in the following charts:



Red items are as follows:

Service	Saving item	Impact on 2023/24
ASC	£81k fees and charges increase.	Unable to increase fees above 11.1% without consultation. Consultation recommended for setting of the fees for 2024/25.
ASC	£26k RAS software reducing provision	This is dependent on an upgrade going live.
CFS	£184k recruitment lag on new posts.	With the unprecedented level of demand for statutory intervention it is unsafe to not fill social work posts given the caseloads already exceeding safe levels.

D&R	£265k place shaping and delivery.	Income was originally expected to be generated through activity linked to Biodiversity Net Gain and Conservation Area Appraisals. The requirement for developments to deliver a 10% uplift in Biodiversity Net Gain is set to be introduced on 1 November 2023, however, it is now clear there is no opportunity to generate income other than through cost recovery through pre-apps and PPAs or by the sale of BNG credits. The sale of credits is represented by a £50k income target in the Environmental Delivery team
D&R	£63k premium service for pre application advice and determination of householder applications.	A trial of the Premium Service took place in October 2022. This service is currently not being offered, therefore the income target is not currently being realised.
D&R	£390k uplift in planning fees	Planning fees are set nationally. DLUHC carried out a consultation from February to April 23 and have recently announced these commence from 6 th December 2023. Current Planning Fee income forecasts are based on them being introduced in Quarter 3.
D&R	£25k financial contribution from registered providers for use of Council's choice based letting system	There is currently a £55k income target for choice based lettings, of which only £26k is forecasted to be achieved. Currently there has not been the anticipated uptake in demand for providers to advertise through the letting system - this is linked with issues in the current demands on in the rental market.
D&R	£100k review of systems processes and resources	<p>This savings is linked with the implementation of the Planning Service Staffing Restructure which is due to go through consultation over the Summer with plans for it to be implemented later this year. Although there is an in year pressure on achieving this, once the new structure is implemented then the saving will be achieved for future years.</p> <p>In year there are posts being held vacant in Minerals & Waste and Planning Policy which are helping offset / mitigate this pressure</p>

2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Two

D&R	£50k planning white paper/levelling up and regeneration bill service efficiencies	This savings is linked with the implementation of the Planning Service Staffing Restructure which is due to go through consultation over the Summer with plans for it to be implemented later this year. Although there is an in year pressure on achieving this, once the new structure is implemented then the saving will be achieved for future years. In year there are posts being held vacant in Minerals & Waste and Planning Policy which are helping offset / mitigate this pressure
Env	£50k for biodiversity and carbon credits	Q2 Forecast that income target will not be achieved.
F&P	£96k from savings on surplus accommodation	At Q2 Budget Monitoring there is a forecasted pressure on West Street House as the property remains vacant.
ICT	£35k print and postage savings	Due to the cost of paper.
S&G	£101k grant funding of elections staff	There is no ongoing grant funding for the restructure of the Elections Team, an investment bid is to be submitted for 24/25 to remove this.

Expenditure Guidance from 24.7.23

5.45 The Quarter One level of overspend meant that we needed to immediately introduce additional controls on all revenue spend within the Council. Agresso authorisation limits were changed accordingly. Non Agresso systems have alternative restrictions in place.

5.46 Spending controls will need to remain in place for the foreseeable future. Any circumnavigation of the rules will be a disciplinary matter per the financial rules of procedure.

5.47 Spending controls will be overseen by the Financial Review Panel (FRP) consisting of the Chief Executive, Executive Director Resources, Service Director Transformation, Heads of Finance & Property, Legal and HR representatives plus the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance.

Measures for All Services

5.48 All services will need to do the following:

- (a) All spend up to £500 to be approved by Service Director/Head of Service, and only to be approved if statutory or unavoidable.

- (b) Spend between £501 and £1000 to be approved by Executive Director, and only to be approved if statutory or unavoidable.
- (c) Spend over £1000 to go to Spending Review Panel (SRP) members to approve. The SRP consists of Chief Executive, Executive Director Resources and the Heads of Finance & Property.
- (d) Recruitment pause with exceptions submitted for consideration by the FRP. Any jobs currently out to advert will be reviewed by the FRP to consider whether recruitment should proceed.
- (e) Reduction in the use of agency staff. All current agency to be reviewed and terminated where possible. Any new agency requests to continue to use the current request forms, but these will come to FRP for approval.
- (f) Overtime to be stopped, and only paid if approved in advance by the FRP with a supporting business case.
- (g) Review of honorariums. These should cease unless linked to specific acting up arrangements.
- (h) All job re-evaluations for existing roles will cease (unless the request forms part of a department restructure or is directly linked to a savings proposal).

5.49 All services to attend an FRP to review the following:

- (a) Statutory/discretionary areas of spend.
- (b) Unachieved savings and mitigation plans.

Measures for Overspending Services

- (a) Spend over £1000 to be approved by the FRP from the week commencing 24th July. Purchase orders over £1000 will need to have an Expenditure Request Form emailed to the FRP in order to be approved (see attached).
- (b) The FRP will review every Thursday morning:
 - Purchase Orders (POs) and other expenditure requests approved in the preceding week by Service.
 - Expenditure Request Forms for outstanding POs over £1000.
- (c) Recovery plan were required by 15.8.23 to demonstrate the action being taken to deliver a breakeven position by year end.

Allowable expenditure

5.50 We will continue to spend on the following:

- Existing staff payroll and pension costs

- Goods and services that have already been received
- Provision of statutory services at a minimum possible level
- Urgent need to safeguard vulnerable citizens
- Existing legal agreements and contracts where the spend is within the agreed and existing budget AND the spend is necessary to meet a statutory service OR a contractual obligation.
- Areas funded by ring-fenced grants (although these will need to be reviewed to ascertain where these are being fully utilised to cover costs/rebadging of expenditure).

Actions Underway

- 5.51 Finance Service to review 2022/23 year end accruals and make recommendations about the accrual policy for 2023/24.
- 5.52 Minimum Revenue Provision review: the Council's external treasury advisors have been commissioned to review the MRP policy. Finance Service leading on this and it has been reflected in the Quarter Two forecast and is subject to Full Council approval in the budget papers.
- 5.53 Review of the opportunities for the flexible use of capital receipts funded through the sale of assets; the Council has little funding left for further transformational activity via the flexible use of capital receipts, though the opportunity to fund a range of work at the Council is there if asset sales occur e.g. digital, projects teams etc. This has been included in the Quarter Two forecasts, and would need to be reflected in the Full Council budget papers .
- 5.54 S151 Officer has contacted DHLUC for an informal discussion on the financial position.

Proposals

- 5.55 To note the £3.3m overspend.
- 5.56 To note the implementation of measures included in the report around recruitment, staffing and agency.
- 5.57 To note the continuation of Financial Review Panel (FRP) to meet weekly to ensure the spending limits are being adhered to.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 None

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council is facing an unprecedented level of financial pressures due a range of factors. The Council is taking proactive steps to reduce this expenditure as highlighted in this report, but the Quarter Two position is placing a significant pressure on the

Council's financial resilience. This position will be monitored very closely in the coming days, weeks and months to measure progress on reducing expenditure whilst mitigating the impact on frontline services.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Quarter Two position

8.2 Appendix B – Budget Changes

Corporate Board's recommendation

Approved

Background Papers:

Q1 Executive report

MTFS paper to 23 November Executive

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: *(add text)

Officer details:

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Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

Appendix A

	Budget				Forecasted Performance												
	Original Budget 2023/24 £	Changes in year 2023/24 £	Funding Released from Reserves 2023/24 £	Revised Budget 2023/24 £	Expenditure			Income			Net						
					Annual Expenditure Budget for 2023/24 £	Annual Expenditure Forecast for 2023/24 £	Expenditure Variance for 2023/24 £	Annual Income Budget for 2023/24 £	Annual Income Forecast for 2023/24 £	Income Variance for 2023/24 £	Net Variance £	Use of Earmarked Reserves £	Mitigation £	Pre-agreed Transformation £m	New Transformation £m	Year end forecast Variance £	Net Exp/Inc after adjustments £
Adult Social Care	62,898,690	26,090	0	62,924,780	85,225,890	89,585,000	4,359,110	-22,301,110	-24,882,810	-2,581,700	1,777,410	-151,000	-701,500	0	-349,500	575,410	63,500,190
Children & Family Services	21,222,570	26,090	0	21,248,660	24,181,650	29,187,850	5,006,200	-2,932,990	-3,167,970	-234,980	4,771,220	-87,000	-179,000	0	-787,000	3,718,220	24,966,880
Executive Director - People	369,810	0	0	369,810	369,810	415,670	45,860	0	0	0	45,860	0	0	0	-49,000	-3,140	366,670
Education (DSG Funded)	-444,000	0	0	-444,000	126,348,550	16,744,510	-109,604,040	-126,792,550	-17,188,510	109,604,040	0	0	0	0	0	0	-444,000
Education	10,687,990	0	20,000	10,707,990	14,759,630	17,225,390	2,465,760	-4,051,640	-3,913,150	138,490	2,604,250	0	-584,000	0	0	2,020,250	12,728,240
Public Health & Wellbeing	-80,000	0	0	-80,000	6,448,470	6,300,570	-147,900	-6,528,470	-6,380,570	147,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	-80,000
Communities & Wellbeing	3,256,850	0	6,940	3,263,790	4,299,040	4,049,480	-249,560	-1,035,250	-799,390	235,860	-13,700	0	0	0	0	-13,700	3,250,090
People	97,911,910	52,180	26,940	97,991,030	261,633,040	163,508,470	-98,124,570	-163,642,010	-56,332,400	107,309,610	9,185,040	-238,000	-1,464,500	0	-1,185,500	6,297,040	104,288,070
Development & Regulation	5,343,890	0	293,520	5,637,410	13,259,660	16,654,400	3,394,740	-7,622,250	-10,359,830	-2,737,580	657,160	-45,000	0	0	0	612,160	6,249,570
Executive Director – Place	213,130	0	0	213,130	213,130	188,400	-24,730	0	0	0	-24,730	0	0	0	0	-24,730	188,400
Environment	27,942,440	-60,000	0	27,882,440	38,753,500	39,267,630	514,130	-10,871,060	-11,502,250	-631,190	-117,060	-262,000	0	0	-255,000	-634,060	27,248,380
Place	33,499,460	-60,000	293,520	33,732,980	52,226,290	56,110,430	3,884,140	-18,493,310	-21,862,080	-3,368,770	515,370	-307,000	0	0	-255,000	-46,630	33,686,350
ICT	2,436,570	0	0	2,436,570	3,169,610	3,116,230	-53,380	-733,040	-693,000	40,040	-13,340	0	0	-22,500	0	-35,840	2,400,730
Executive Director - Resources	317,170	0	0	317,170	317,170	305,870	-11,300	0	-38,700	-38,700	-50,000	0	0	0	0	-50,000	267,170
Commissioning & Procurement	448,480	0	0	448,480	14,529,810	14,631,640	101,830	-14,081,330	-14,103,690	-22,360	79,470	0	0	-143,000	-50,000	-113,530	334,950
Finance & Property	1,468,220	0	0	1,468,220	33,263,660	34,968,360	1,704,700	-31,795,440	-32,987,410	-1,191,970	512,730	-94,000	-35,000	0	-139,000	244,730	1,712,950
Strategy & Governance	7,288,880	7,820	208,080	7,504,780	8,567,980	9,311,190	743,210	-1,063,200	-1,538,100	-474,900	268,310	-9,000	-74,000	-131,000	-74,000	-19,690	7,485,090
Transformation	0	0	0	0	0	126,560	126,560	0	0	0	126,560	0	0	-126,560	0	0	0
Resources	11,959,320	7,820	208,080	12,175,220	59,848,230	62,459,850	2,611,620	-47,673,010	-49,360,900	-1,687,890	923,730	-103,000	-109,000	-423,060	-263,000	25,670	12,200,890
Chief Executive	540,710	0	0	540,710	540,710	530,710	-10,000	0	0	0	-10,000	0	0	0	0	-10,000	530,710
Chief Executive	540,710	0	0	540,710	540,710	530,710	-10,000	0	0	0	-10,000	0	0	0	0	-10,000	530,710
Capital Financing & Management	14,850,640	0	0	14,850,640	15,360,640	12,851,250	-2,509,390	-510,000	-873,000	-363,000	-2,872,390	0	0	0	-130,000	-3,002,390	11,848,250
Risk Management	0	0	-313,520	-313,520	-313,520	-313,520	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-313,520
Capital Financing and Management	14,850,640	0	-313,520	14,537,120	15,047,120	12,537,730	-2,509,390	-510,000	-873,000	-363,000	-2,872,390	0	0	0	-130,000	-3,002,390	11,534,730
Total	158,762,040	0	215,020	158,977,060	389,295,390	295,147,190	-94,148,200	-230,318,330	-128,428,380	101,889,950	7,741,750	-648,000	-1,573,500	-423,060	-1,833,500	3,263,690	162,240,750

Service	Original Net Budget	Budget B/F from 22-23 released from reserves	Grants/ funding released from reserves	FAGG approved release from reserves	Budget changes not requiring approval	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	£000
Adult Social Care	62,899				26				62,925
Children and Family Services	21,223				26				21,249
Executive Director	370								370
Education DSG funded	(444)								(444)
Education	10,688	20							10,708
Public Health & Wellbeing	(80)								(80)
Communities & Wellbeing	3,257				7				3,264
People	97,912	20	0	0	59	0	0	0	97,991
Executive Director	213								213
Development & Regulation	5,344	294							5,637
Environment	27,942				(60)				27,882
Place	33,499	294	0	0	(60)	0	0	0	33,733
ICT	2,437								2,437
Executive Director	317								317
Commissioning & Procurement	448								448
Finance & Property	1,468								1,468
Strategy & Governance	7,289	192		16	8				7,505
Resources	11,959	192	0	16	8	0	0	0	12,175
Chief Executive	541								541
Capital Financing & Risk	14,851	(314)							14,537
Total	158,762	192	0	16	7	0	0	0	158,977
Quarter One	158,762	192							158,954
Quarter Two	158,954			16	7				158,977

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Scrutiny Commission – 28 November 2023

Item 10 – Health Scrutiny Committee Update

Verbal Item

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Scrutiny Commission – 28 November 2023

Item 11 – Appointment of Task and Finish Groups

Verbal Item

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Review of the Newbury Sports Hub Development

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	2 November 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Janine Lewis
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	12 October 2023
Report Author:	April Peberdy / Paul Martindill / Jude Thomas
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4449

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 On 23 March 2023, the Executive approved a report to allocate £3.878m to complete the development of Newbury Sports Hub and to give approval to sign the Development Management Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services. The report was, subsequently, called in and considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 23 June 2023. A number of questions were raised, principally around the costs to date, potential costs of not progressing the project, and the impact on the Leisure Contract and Playing Pitch Strategy. This report addresses these questions, in order that the Executive can review the decision of 23 March.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider the evidence provided in answer to the questions of the Scrutiny Commission.
- 2.2 To note the financial implications associated with progressing or not progressing the project, with particular reference to the impact on the revenue account.
- 2.3 To note that it is proposed that a new annual Stage E review of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) will be undertaken imminently, and this will provide up-to-date data, with regard to the supply and demand of playing pitches in West Berkshire. This review will inform the refresh of the PPS Action Plan.
- 2.4 In line with the Council Strategy, created by the new administration, and the changing financial environment, it is recommended that the Sports Hub project is closed, in its current proposed form. Pitch provision at the identified site could remain under consideration as part of the refresh of the PPS Action Plan, following the Stage E Review, and the findings of the review will be used to inform the future provision of playing pitches in West Berkshire.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary										
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>The Newbury Sports Hub has a budget allocation of £3.87m with delegated authority to the Executive Director for a further £250,000. This was the budget position in March 2023. As of Q1 £2.325m has been reprofiled to FY24/25, leaving £1.8m in the budget during 23/24.</p> <p>If the Sports Hub is to progress, a further review of costs in the light of inflationary pressure, and the intervening time, would be required.</p> <p>If the scheme does not progress, the capital budget allocation for the scheme can be allocated to other priorities within the PPS or withdrawn entirely. There would be a cost to the revenue budget of any abortive costs incurred on the project.</p> <p>Costs to date, where quantifiable, are detailed in the table below:</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pre-construction costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£126,585.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal fees, in respect of the land transaction documentation and DMA</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£46,802.90</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Legal fees in respect of Planning, including the Judicial Review: Planning advice: £ 3,401.50 Judicial review: £33,748.50 Sub-Total: £37,150.00 Less recovered costs (Judicial Review): £11,000.00 </td> <td style="text-align: right; vertical-align: top;">£26,150.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional estimated legal costs of decoupling the Sports Hub from the contract</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£5,000-£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adjustment in management fee to EA, should Sports Hub be removed from contract (not yet confirmed)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Pre-construction costs	£126,585.00	Legal fees, in respect of the land transaction documentation and DMA	£46,802.90	Legal fees in respect of Planning, including the Judicial Review: Planning advice: £ 3,401.50 Judicial review: £33,748.50 Sub-Total: £37,150.00 Less recovered costs (Judicial Review): £11,000.00	£26,150.00	Additional estimated legal costs of decoupling the Sports Hub from the contract	£5,000-£10,000	Adjustment in management fee to EA, should Sports Hub be removed from contract (not yet confirmed)	£0
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Adjustment in management fee to EA, should Sports Hub be removed from contract (not yet confirmed)	£0										

	NRC’s legal costs – due	£10,000
	Total	£214,537.90- £219,537.90
	<p>The cost of the Interim Consultant has been met through capital cost centres.</p> <p>Revenue budget of £30k was allocated to the service to cover six months of running costs of the provision; this will be available for other costs/savings in future financial years.</p>	
Human Resource:	<p>The management of the Newbury Sports Hub is included in the new leisure management contract. Posts assigned to manage the Sports Hub by the new leisure operator, Everyone Active, include a full-time football/sports development officer and 0.5 post for an apprentice. Other part time staff included cleaners.</p> <p>A volunteer programme was also proposed to train volunteers to support local clubs manage match days.</p>	
Legal:	<p>Alliance Leisure Services (ALS) was appointed, under the UK Leisure Framework, to oversee the design and construction of the Sports Hub project and appoint designers and contractors accordingly. A pre-construction agreement has been signed and the works undertaken and as such the pre-construction costs (£126,500) have been incurred.</p> <p>Heads of Terms and an Agreement for Lease (AFL) - see below in ‘Property’ section - were negotiated with Newbury Rugby Club (NRC) and a Development Management Agreement (DMA) negotiated with ALS in respect of the main works to be undertaken. These Agreements have not been signed. As such the Council is not contractually committed to enter into the lease, undertake the works, or make the payments envisaged under the AFL or DMA.</p> <p>The Council and NRC agreed in the Heads of Terms that, in the event that the parties do not enter into the lease and the transaction was aborted by the Council, then the Council would pay the NRC aborted legal fees. These fees are set out in the body of this report.</p> <p>The Sports Hub facility is included as a facility to be managed in the leisure management contract with Sports and Leisure Management Limited (trading as Everyone Active) which</p>	

	<p>began on 1 July 2023. In the event that the project does not progress the leisure management contract will require a formal variation in order to remove the facility from the scope of the contract. Everyone Active (EA) has the right under the contract to negotiate an amendment to the Annual Fee payable under the leisure management contract to reflect this change. In addition, legal costs will be incurred to document the amendment.</p>			
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Risk is low in relation to a decision not to progress with the project. A total of £126.5k has been spent on progressing design and planning applications for the Sports Hub. No contractual obligations exist in relation to the construction phase of the project.</p> <p>The Sports Hub was included within the scope of the new leisure management contract but is considered close to cost neutral when income with expenditure are calculated. In light of this, the leisure operator (Everyone Active) has advised, to date, that the management of the Sports Hub can be removed from the contract without an adjustment to the Annual Fee payable by the Council under the leisure management contract. This is yet to be confirmed and would be subject to legal agreement between the Everyone Active and the Council.</p>			
<p>Property:</p>	<p>Heads of Terms, an Agreement for Lease (AFL) and other associated documents (such as the form of lease, joint use agreement and memorandum of understanding) were negotiated between Newbury Rugby Club and West Berkshire Council to enable the Council to take a lease for the area required to create the Newbury Sports Hub. The Heads of Terms were agreed but the AFL remains unsigned and the Council is, therefore, not bound by the AFL terms.</p>			
<p>Policy:</p>	<p>The Newbury Sports Hub project was developed to address the need to increase the provision of artificial grass pitches as detailed in the Playing Pitch Strategy. If the project progresses it will be delivered in accordance the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>			
	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>Commentary</p>

<p>Equalities Impact:</p>			<p>A review of demand and supply for sports pitches has shown an increase of 38 teams in West Berkshire between 2018 and 2022, whilst the supply of sports pitches has remained largely static. The number of women’s teams has grown by seven, and the number of adult teams by 14.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the number of teams that are traveling to access sports pitches outside of West Berkshire with this figure now reaching 59 teams.</p>
<p>Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?</p>			<p>Removing the Sports Hub completely would mean the loss of the opportunity to provide a 3G artificial pitch and stadium that was to be developed to meet the FA ground grading Step 4 standard.</p> <p>A 3G pitch could provide 70-80 hours of use for football training and matches each week, compared to a grass pitch which typically accommodates 6-8 hours per week. Therefore, removing the opportunity to develop an additional 3G pitch reduces the potential capacity for football training and matches substantially for the Newbury area.</p> <p>A key objective of developing the Newbury Sports Hub to the Step 4 standard was to enable local teams to progress through the football league hierarchy when they achieved promotion.</p>
<p>B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?</p>			<p>No</p>

<p>Environmental Impact:</p>			<p>Planning conditions attached to the Sports Hub addressed environmental impacts of the development. Mitigation included the expansion of perimeter hedgerows, creation of a wildflower meadow, tree planting (via the Queen’s canopy already undertaken) and creation of a bee bank. The Pavilion was also required to achieve an excellent BREEAM rating for energy management.</p> <p>There have been concerns raised around the use of micro-plastics in the manufacture of 3G pitches. Sport England have advised that there are limited green alternatives to 3G.</p>
<p>Health Impact:</p>			<p>A 3G pitch would increase opportunities for children to be active and includes the provision of school holiday programmes. It would enable more teams to train at least once per week on a sports pitch. Specific health initiatives can be programmed to address mental health and older adults can participate in initiatives such as ‘walking football.’</p>
<p>ICT Impact:</p>			<p>N/A</p>
<p>Digital Services Impact:</p>			<p>N/A</p>
<p>Council Strategy Priorities:</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all • Thriving communities with a strong local voice.
<p>Core Business:</p>			<p>The management of the Sports Hub is included in the new leisure management contract that commenced on 1 July 2023.</p> <p>In the event that the Sports Hub project proceeds, the commencement of the management of the Sports Hub will begin when the project is completed and</p>

				<p>continue for the term of the leisure management contract.</p> <p>In the event that the Sports Hub project does not proceed, the leisure management contract will need to be amended in order to remove the facility from the scope of the contract. As set out above the leisure operator’s initial view is that this will not require an adjustment to the Annual Fee due under the leisure contract, but it should be noted that this is subject to agreement and finalisation of documentation to affect this amendment.</p> <p>The impact of having a reduced facility at the Monks Lane site would require further discussion regarding any impact on the Leisure contract.</p>
Data Impact:				N/A
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Public consultation was undertaken in 2020 to test public support for the proposed location of the Sports Hub at Newbury Rugby club and the results are referenced in the report.</p> <p>Consultation on the Stage E review of the PPS will be undertaken with sports clubs via their respective National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and not directly with the public.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 A report was presented to the Executive in March 2023 regarding revised costs and seeking approval to progress with the signing of the Development Management Agreement (DMA) with Alliance Leisure Services (ALS) to progress the development of the Sports Hub at Newbury Rugby Club. The report is attached as Appendix A.
- 4.2 The Executive resolved to approve the costs presented and delegate authority to enter into the relevant agreements to progress the project on the basis that a judicial review challenge was finally determined.
- 4.3 The Executive decision was called in and subsequently considered by the Scrutiny Commission.
- 4.4 The Scrutiny Commission met on 23 June 2023 and resolved that the decision should be returned to the Executive for reconsideration.
- 4.5 This report sets out further information as requested by the Scrutiny Commission:

Review of the Newbury Sports Hub Development

- (a) What are the legal costs incurred by the Council?
- The total legal costs incurred by the Council to date are £72,952.90 plus approximately £5 -10k to remove the Sports Hub from the Leisure Management Contract, should it not proceed.
- (b) What are the costs incurred by Newbury Rugby Club?
- Newbury Rugby Club has advised that their abortive legal costs in preparing the draft AFL, the proposed lease and the Heads of Terms is just under £10k (excluding VAT).
- (c) Are there any penalty fees associated with not proceeding with the project?
- No. A total of £126.5k has been spent on progressing design and planning applications for the Sports Hub, however no contractual agreements have been signed in relation to the construction phase of the project.
- (d) What are the implications of not progressing with the development of the Newbury Sports Hub in relation to the new leisure management contract?
- The management of the Newbury Sports Hub is included in the new leisure management contract which commenced on 1 July 2023. The Leisure Operator, Everyone Active, has initially advised that should the Sports Hub development not proceed, they will work co-operatively to undertake the legal work with the Council to remove the Sports Hub from the leisure this will not result in an adjustment to the Annual Fee, albeit there is a contractual right for EA to request such an adjustment.
- (e) Is there a need to revisit the Playing Pitch Strategy?
- There is not a need to revisit the Playing Pitch Strategy itself, as it is considered to be robust and fit for purpose. It would, however, be timely to undertake a new annual Stage E Review which will inform a refresh of the Action Plan. Whilst the Sports Hub, in its current proposed form, would need to be removed from the Action Plan, if the Executive decide not to proceed with the project, pitch provision on the Monks Lane site could be considered, in the prioritisation of projects within the Action Plan, if all parties were in agreement.

4.6 More detailed answers are provided in Section 7.

4.7 In light of the information provided within the report, a decision will be required by the Executive, with regard to the future of the Sports Hub project.

4.8 If, following the Stage E review, there is justification for developing a new pitch on the current proposed site, this will need the agreement of all parties.

5 Introduction

- 5.1 The report is providing information for consideration regarding the approved funding of £3.87M (plus additional £250k contingency) for the development of the Newbury Sports Hub.

6 Background

- 6.1 In February 2020, West Berkshire Council approved the implementation of a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). The PPS is created in partnership with Sport England and the four National Governing Bodies of Sport for football, rugby, cricket and hockey. The purpose of the PPS is to assess the demand and supply of sports pitches throughout West Berkshire and to identify priority projects that will address the needs of local clubs and the wider community. The PPS is attached as Appendix B.
- 6.2 A report, 'Newbury Sports Ground – Joint Land Deal' was presented to Executive in April 2021, detailing the results of a public consultation with 349 responses, of which 53.1% were supportive and 35.4% not supportive of the proposal for a new sports ground at Newbury Rugby Club. The report's appendices also included details of a Joint Use Agreement and the proposed procurement strategy utilising the UK Leisure Framework Agreement.
- 6.3 On 16 December 2021 the Executive agreed a budget of £3.351m and the appointment of Alliance Leisure Services to construct the Newbury Sports Hub to achieve a Step 4 FA ground grading standard with the 3G pitch meeting FIFA and world rugby regulation standards.
- 6.4 The scheme was delayed due to a judicial review and revised costs, of £3.878m (plus additional £250k contingency), were presented to, and approved by, the Executive on 23 March 2023.
- 6.5 This report was subsequently called in and presented to the Scrutiny Commission on 23 June 2023 and it was resolved that the decision should be returned to the Executive for reconsideration, in light of specific information as detailed below.

7 Information Requested by the Scrutiny Commission

- 7.1 What are the legal costs incurred by the Council?

7.1.1 The total legal costs incurred by the Council to date:

- In respect of the land transaction documentation and DMA are £46,802.70.
- In respect of Planning, including the Judicial Review are £26,150.

7.1.2 If the Sports Hub project does not proceed and it is necessary to remove the Sports Hub from the leisure management contract, additional legal costs in the region of £5k to £10k are likely to be incurred.

7.1.3 The costs above relate to legal costs alone, in accordance with the Scrutiny commission request. However, significant resource, across services within the

Council, has also been expended in preparing the design and proposals, including in the negotiation, which formed part of the procurement process for the leisure management contract. This cannot be quantified and is not included

7.2 What are the costs incurred by Newbury Rugby Club?

7.2.1 Newbury Rugby club has advised that their abortive legal costs in preparing the draft AFL, the proposed lease and the Heads of Terms are just under £10k (excluding VAT). The club advised that it has spent considerable time dealing with other aspects of this project, but this work has been undertaken by volunteers.

7.3 Are there any penalty fees associated with not proceeding with the project?

7.3.1 No. A total of £126.5k has been spent on progressing design and planning applications for the Sports Hub, however no contractual agreements have been signed in relation to the construction phase of the project.

7.4 What are the implications of not progressing with the development of the Newbury Sports Hub in relation to the new leisure management contract?

7.4.1 The management of the Newbury Sports Hub is included in the new leisure management contract which commenced on 1 July 2023. Management of the Newbury Sports Hub includes: staffing, marketing, maintenance, bookings and sports programme development. Income generated is held by the leisure operator, Everyone Active, to balance these costs and has been taken into account when calculating the Annual Fee for the leisure management contract as a whole. Everyone Active has initially advised that should the Sports Hub development not proceed, they will work co-operatively to undertake the legal work with the Council to remove the Sports Hub from the leisure contract. Nonetheless, legal resources will be required in negotiating and effecting the removal of the Sports Hub from the leisure management contract by way of a deed of variation for which additional legal costs in the region of the sum set out in paragraph 7.1.2 are likely to be incurred. Everyone Active has advised that its initial view is that the removal of the Sports Hub as a facility to be managed under the leisure management contract will not result in an adjustment to the Annual Fee, albeit there is a contractual right for EA to request such an adjustment.

7.5 Is there a need to revisit the Playing Pitch Strategy?

7.5.1 To ensure the PPS remains up to date (and recognised by Sport England), it is a requirement that the data underpinning the PPS is regularly refreshed through a Stage E review. The NGBs hold the databases for all clubs that are registered to play in their leagues and have accurate data for the number of clubs and teams existing within West Berkshire for each sport and where they currently play. This data is refreshed annually at the start of the respective seasons.

7.5.2 Between January and July 2022, a Stage E review, including a comprehensive assessment of the demand and supply for sports pitches across West Berkshire, was undertaken in consultation with Sport England and the National

Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs). This data, whilst not currently out of date, shortly will be.

- 7.5.3 It would, therefore, be timely to undertake a new Stage E review to ensure that the most up to date data, and the strategic priorities of the new administration, are reflected in a new Action Plan.
- 7.5.4 Newbury Sports Hub is the principal priority within the current Action Plan. The impact of completely stopping the Newbury Sports Hub project is that an opportunity to increase the capacity for training and matches in the Newbury and Thatcham area is lost. A 3G pitch can provide 70-80 hours of use for football training and matches each week, compared to a grass pitch which typically accommodates 6-8 hours per week. Therefore, completely removing the opportunity of a 3G pitch reduces the capacity for football training and matches substantially for the Newbury and Thatcham sub area.
- 7.5.5 A key objective of developing the Newbury Sports Hub to the Step 4 standard was to enable local teams to progress through the football league hierarchy when they achieved promotion. If the project is not progressed in its current form, this opportunity, on this site, will not exist.
- 7.5.6 In summary, there is not a need to revisit the Playing Pitch Strategy, and any decision not to continue with the Sports Hub development, in its current form, does not, necessitate a Stage E review. That said, the fact that, shortly, new demand data will be available, and the current Stage E data out of date, undertaking a new Stage E review would be a timely opportunity to reflect the strategic priorities of the new administration.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 Following Executive approval of a report to allocate £3.878m to complete the development of Newbury Sports Hub and to give approval to sign the Development Management Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services, on 23 March 2023, the report was called in and considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 23 June 2023. A number of questions were raised, principally around the costs to date, potential costs of not progressing the project, and the impact on the Leisure Contract and Playing Pitch Strategy and these questions have been addressed in this report, in order that the Executive can review the decision of 23 March.
- 8.2 Noting the financial implications associated with progressing, and not progressing, the development of the Sports Hub, the opportunity to undertake an annual Stage E review of the Playing Pitch Strategy, and the clear political strategic direction of the new administration, it is recommended that the project is not progressed in its current proposed form, and that a Stage E review of the PPS is undertaken and the findings, are used to inform the future provision of playing pitches in West Berkshire. Pitch provision at the Monks Lane site could remain under consideration as part of the refresh of the PPS Action Plan, following the Stage E Review.

9 Appendices

Appendix A – Executive Report – 23 March 2023 - Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign the Development Management Agreement

Appendix B – Playing Pitch Strategy

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 Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected:

Officer details:

Name: Jude Thomas
Job Title: Sports & Leisure Manager
Tel No: 01635 519083
E-mail: jude.thomas@westberks.gov.uk

Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	23 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Howard Woollaston
Date Head of Service agreed report: <i>(for Corporate Board)</i>	15 March 2023
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	15 March 2023
Report Author:	Paul Martindill

1 Purpose of the Report

To update on the revised capital costs for the Newbury Sports Hub, following the Judicial Review, which can be delivered at cost certainty for £3.878M and progress into a Delivery Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services to complete the scheme.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To approve the allocation of £3.878M to complete the development of Newbury Sports Hub and thereby achieve the delivery of the number one priority in the Playing Pitch Strategy and to give approval, subject to planning permission, for the signing of the Development Management Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services.
- 2.2 In consultation with the Portfolio Member for Finance and Economic Development, the Executive Director of Resources is given delegated authority to approve additional costs arising in relation to this development up to a maximum of £250k above £3.878M.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The award of the contract to build Newbury Sports Hub was agreed by the Executive on 16 December 2021. An allocation of £3.351M was also approved. This was based on a cost plan formulated on 22 October 2021 with a projected 26 week

Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement

	<p>construction commencement programme starting in January 2022.</p> <p>A further £250k was allocated for Executive Director approval to cover the costs of expected planning conditions, which were unknown at the time of the report.</p> <p>Alliance Leisure Services (ALS) have subsequently costed the 29 planning conditions and reviewed inflationary pressures and provided a revised cost fee of £3.696M. The revised costs represented an increase of £345K which remained valid until 13 May 2022.</p> <p>WBC has not signed the Development Management Agreement (DMA) due to the claim for Judicial Review, which has delayed the commencement of the construction programme.</p> <p>On 3rd February 2023, the High Court dismissed the Judicial Review and ALS have now submitted further revised costs of £3.878 million for Executive approval prior to signing the Development Management Agreement for the Newbury Sports Hub.</p> <p>The Council has been informed that the claimant is intending to pursue a further appeal to the court of appeal. Any appeal would result in further delays to the process, with potential financial implications arising due to inflationary pressures.</p>
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	<p>A claim for Judicial Review (JR) was issued on the 26th April 2022, and by an order dated 3rd February 2023, the claim was dismissed by the High Court. The claimant's application for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal was also rejected by the High Court. The claimant has informed the Council of their intention to appeal the decision to the Court of Appeal. However, no valid application has been served on the Council.</p> <p>Completion of both the Agreement for Lease (see below) and the DMA would commit the Council to the costs of the project but works cannot commence until final determination of planning (including the JR or any appeal). The Council will not complete the Agreement for Lease or DMA until planning is in place.</p>
Risk	Risk was minimised by stopping the development of the Sport

Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement

Management:	<p>Hub whilst the High Court considered the claim for Judicial Review. If the appeal is granted and the JR claim is accepted by the High Court, this may subsequently result, amongst other factors, in the voiding of the planning decision.</p> <p>The delay has had inevitable financial implications due to cost inflation but, at the point of approval to delay, this was believed to be less than the cost of commencing the scheme and then pausing works or reinstating works. This risk would remain whilst any appeal remained pending.</p>			
Property:	<p>The development has been subject to a land deal and lease with Newbury Rugby Club. These agreements have not been signed due to the risks associated with the JR claim but are ready to be signed, subject to the conclusion of the determination of the claim.</p>			
Policy:	<p>The project will be delivered in accordance the National Planning Policy Framework. Specifically it addresses the need to increase the provision of artificial grass pitches as detailed in the Playing Pitch Strategy.</p>			
	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			<p>Future demand and supply analysis shows a significant deficit for all pitch typologies across West Berkshire. The provision of the Artificial Grass Pitch will assist in meeting latent demand and facilitate growth for participation for adults and children in football and rugby.</p>

Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			<p>The new pavilion and grounds will be fully accessible.</p> <p>The Sports Hub has been incorporated into the new leisure management contract and market testing is in progress to ensure the future programme benefits all sections of the West Berkshire community.</p> <p>Officers are also working in partnership with the Football Association to explore development partnerships for football.</p>
Environmental Impact:	X			<p>This has been addressed through the planning conditions. Multiple measures are in place including the expansion of hedgerows, creation of a wildflower meadow, tree planting (via the Queen's canopy already undertaken) and a bee bank. The Pavilion will achieve an excellent BREEAM rating for energy management.</p>
Health Impact:	X			<p>The new 3G pitch will increase opportunities for children to be active and can provide a variety of football programmes, for adults such as "walking football," enabling less active and older people to continue to participate in sport.</p>
ICT Impact:		X		None
Digital Services Impact:		X		None
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			<p>The Sports Hub delivers a key priority within the Playing Pitch Strategy.</p>
Core Business:	X			<p>The Newbury Sports Hub will enhance the sports infrastructure within West Berkshire. The operational management of the service is included in new leisure management contract that is currently out to tender. The sports hub will have a</p>

				positive impact on increasing levels of physical activity for adults and children.
Data Impact:		X		None
Consultation and Engagement:	Consultation and engagement was undertaken and reported to Executive in April 2021.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Council received a claim for Judicial Review (JR) in relation to the planning permission which had been granted for the Sports Hub. The Judicial Review and any subsequent appeal have implications for both the timeline for the completion of the Sports Hub, and the associated costs of development.
- 4.2 Following the hearing of the claim for Judicial Review that took place on 19 January 2023, the High Court dismissed the claim and refused to grant the claimant leave to appeal against that decision. The Council has recently been informed that the applicant has applied for leave to appeal directly to the Court of Appeal, but it has not been served with the appellants notice. Any request for leave to appeal is therefore out of time, and could only proceed if a request for an extension of time were allowed by the Court of Appeal. On the basis of the information known by the Council, there is no basis upon which the Court could reasonably grant an application for an extension of time in the circumstances.
- 4.3 To progress the project, revised costs have been established and require member approval prior to signing the DMA with Alliance Leisure Services Limited.
- 4.4 Following the completion of the signed agreement, mobilisation will commence with an estimated lead-in time of 16 weeks to supply energy to the work site and a 26 week construction period, thereafter.
- 4.5 The Sports Hub has been included within the new Leisure Management Contract and operation of the site can commence on completion of the capital works.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Judicial Review brought against West Berkshire Council was rejected by the High Court following a number of hearings (the latest being 19 January 2023). The claimant has since indicated that a further appeal to the Court of Appeal is intended to be pursued.
- 5.2 To date the Newbury Sports Hub project has been delayed for 14 months during the course of this action.

Background

- 5.3 The Executive agreed a land deal with Newbury Rugby Club for the site of the Newbury Sports Hub on 24 April 2021
- 5.4 An Executive decision was taken to build the Newbury Sports Hub on 16 December 2021, with an agreed budget of £3.351 million, with Executive Director approval to add a further £250k as the scheme was developed to cost certainty and for the discharge of any planning conditions.
- 5.5 Planning permission was granted for the development of Newbury Sports Hub on 16 March 2022 with 29 planning conditions.

Scope of the Project

- 5.6 The scope of the Sports Hub has not changed during the past 14 months. The Sports Hub will deliver a new sports stadium to meet the standards of a Step 4 ground, enabling local football teams to play their home matches at the venue. The Step 4 ground grading will enable local teams like Newbury FC, who have maintained their commitment to relocate to these facilities, to achieve promotions without the need to change their home ground.
- 5.7 The Sports Hub significantly increases the capacity for both football and rugby and it is projected that more than 2,000 bookings will take place each year, when the site reaches operational maturity.
- 5.8 The full details of the project are listed below:
- (a) A pavilion with 400 square metres of internal space containing:
- Four team changing rooms, officials changing room and medical room
 - Club/committee meeting room
 - Function room/social area
 - Kitchen/Servery
 - Staff office
 - Toilets for visitors and spectators
- (b) A 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with dimensions of 106m x 70m
- Fully accessible spectator stand
 - Six sports lighting pillars
 - Equipment storage containers and equipment including goals
 - Essential maintenance equipment including pitch roller
 - 4.5m high fencing around the pitch and double turnstile access for spectators.
 - The 3G AGP pitch will be marked for both football and rugby and delivered to FIFA and World Rugby Regulation 22 standards
- (c) A new car park encompassing 52 spaces including two disabled bays, electric charging points and bike racks.

Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement

(d) The development also includes ground works to meet the planning condition of a 10% increase in bio diversity on the site. This is achieved by:

- Planting of the Queen’s tree canopy.
- Doubling the width of more than 300m of hedgerow on the borders of the site
- Planting wildflower meadows on two banks of the site
- Introducing a bee bank

Mobilisation

5.9 The lead-in time for securing energy to the site is 16 weeks and the construction will be completed over a 26 week period.

5.10 In order for clubs to use the Sports Hub as their home venue, registration with local leagues is required in March of each year. If works commence in April 2023 the Sports Hub should be ready for registration with local leagues in March 2024, enabling teams to play their home matches at the Sports Hub from September 2024.

Updated costs

5.11 The revised costs are shown in the table below:

Cost Certainty Summary at 21.2.23	Phoenix & S& C Slatter	Phoenix and Velocity Sports
3G Artificial Pitch with perimeter fencing, floodlighting, macadam hard-standing areas, storage container, spectator stands and associated features	£1,475,575	£1,329,972
Single Story Sports Pavilion building, car park and external works	£2,083,429	£2,083,429
BREEAM consultant fee	£2,250	£2,250
Provisional sum. External signage and Fixture, fittings & Equipment	£25,000	£25,000
Provisional sum, performance bond	£7,850	£7,850
Project Management Fees, Delivery Fees and UKLF Charge	£145,628	£137,064

Newbury Sports Hub - revised costs and seeking permission to sign Development Management Agreement

Project Costs	£3,739,731	£3,585,565
Client Held contingency – Pitch	£186,987	£179,278
Client Held contingency – Club House	£113,208	£112,780
Overall cost and contingency (excl. VAT)	£4,039,926	£3,877,623

5.12 The Velocity submission aligns more closely to the specification, however, S&C Slatter have put forward an innovative proposal using an organic infill. SSL have flagged risks with this option and would not warrant the performance, although S&C Slatter would provide a performance warranty. The proposal put forward by S&C Slatter is unproven at this point in time and, given the requirement of the pitch to meet and retain FIFA and World Rugby Regulation 22 standards, it would appear prudent to proceed as per the specification and consideration could be given to looking at the innovative proposal when the pitch requires replacement in the future.

5.13 Therefore, the budget figure for the project will be £3.878 million. This assumes entering into contract by mid-April with a practical completion date of December 2023. Any delays in entering into contract will require a review of the ongoing inflationary impact on costs.

5.14 The current budget requirement reflects an increase of £527,000 as a result of the Judicial Review application and subsequent appeals.

Project Timeline

5.15 Assuming the DMA can be signed at the end of March the current project timeline is summarised as follows:

Executed DMA and JCT	Design Work & Mobilisation of Supply Chain.	Collation Info to Assist Discharge & Discharge Time frames	Commence Work on Site / Practical Completion
24.3.23	Design Work (8 wks) 27.3.23 – 28.5.23	Collation info (3 wks) 24.3.23 – 13.4.23	Commence on Site: PPS 22.6.23 Velocity 23.6.23
	Mobilisation of Supply Chain (8 wks) 14.4.23 – 8.6.23	Discharge Timeframe (8 wks) 28.4.23 – 22.6.23	Practical Completion: PPS 21.12.23 Velocity 23.11.23

6 Other options considered

6.1 The other substantive option is not to progress with the scheme. If the Council determined not to progress, it should be noted that, whilst there are some options to develop more artificial grass pitches, no site has been identified, to date, that has sufficient space to develop a ground to a Step 4 standard. The development of the Sports Hub will deliver against the Council's ambition as detailed in the Playing Pitch Strategy and not progressing with the scheme is not recommended as an option.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Demand for football has continued to grow across West Berkshire and the success of the national women's football team has acted as a catalyst to significantly increase demand for playing football for women and girls. The latest data in the Stage E review of the Playing Pitch Strategy showed that more than 50 teams are having to travel outside of West Berkshire to access pitches.

7.2 This information is supporting the case for the development of new facilities within West Berkshire as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan and the creation of the Newbury Sports Hub, alongside further artificial grass pitches, will play a significant role in addressing this demand.

8 Appendices

None

Corporate Board's recommendation

*(add text)

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: *(add text)

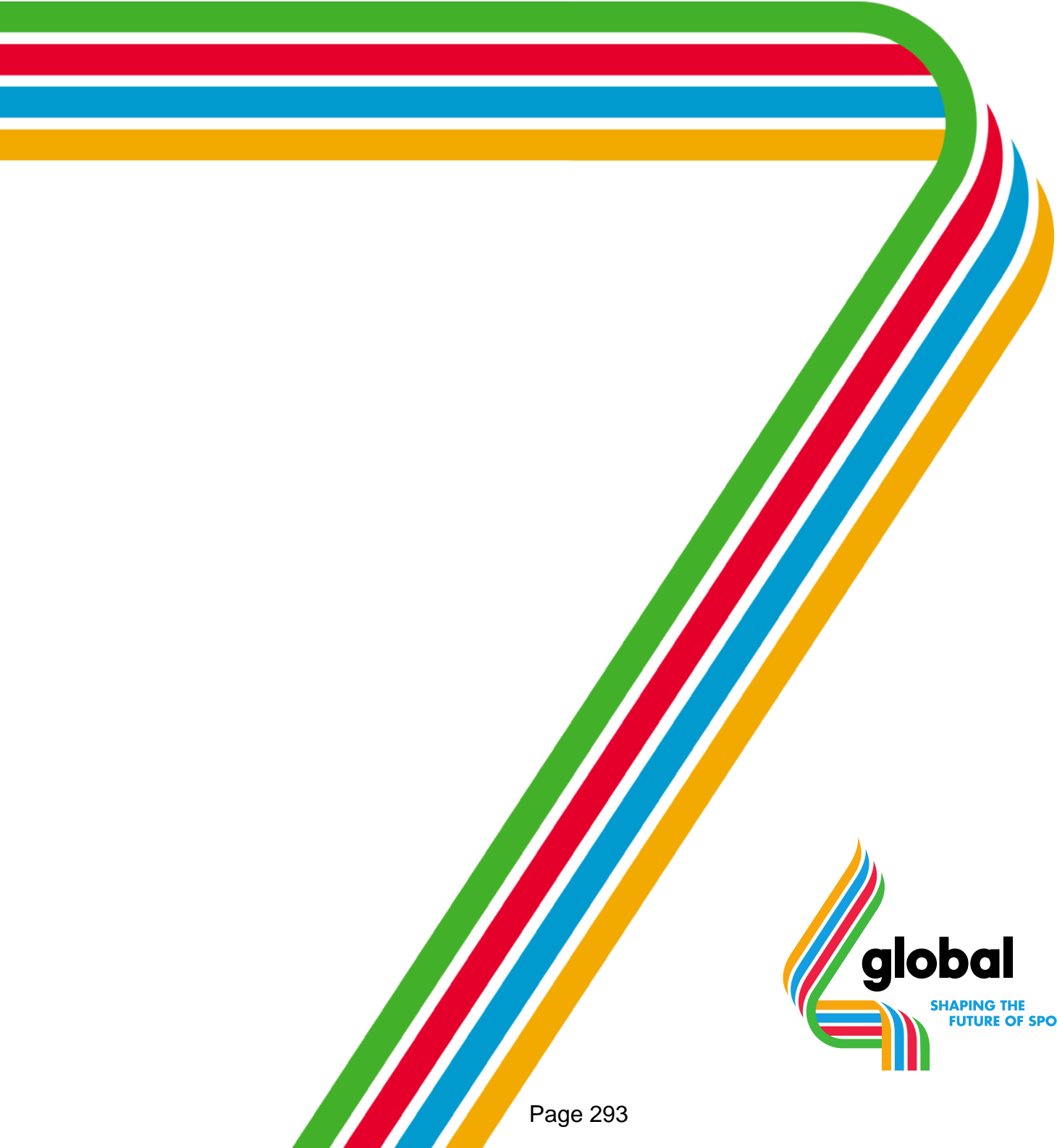
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**West Berkshire Council Playing Pitch Strategy
Strategy Document**

Version- Final

November 2019 (Approved Feb 2020)



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SPORT



4global Consulting Terms of Reference

Estimates and forecasts contained within this report are based on the data obtained at that time and the accuracy of resultant findings and recommendations is dependent on the quality of that data.

The author(s) will not be held liable for any data and information provided by third party organisations as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) delivery process. While the data and recommendations have been conscientiously reviewed through the PPS governance process followed throughout project delivery, it has not been possible for the author to independently review every element of data provided by third parties.

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Section 1: Introduction and strategic context



1 Introduction and scope

1.1 Project scope and objectives

- 1.1.1 West Berkshire District Council (hereafter referred to as the Council, or WBDC) has commissioned 4global Consulting to prepare a Playing Pitch Strategy, to provide the Council with a clear evidence base and set of recommendations for future outdoor sports facility development across the study area.
- 1.1.2 A PPS is a strategic assessment that provides an up to date analysis of supply and demand for playing pitches (grass and artificial) in a local authority area. The strategy and the evidence base upon which it is based is delivered using national guidance and facility insight from specific Governing Bodies of Sport.
- 1.1.3 The assessment will focus on facilities used by the following sports as they were identified as the key sports which use facilities within West Berkshire.
1. Football
 2. Rugby Union
 3. Cricket
 4. Hockey
- 1.1.4 Within these sports, the PPS will seek as far as is practicable to include consideration of all forms of play to:
5. Ensure that service delivery is focused to meet the current and future needs of residents of, and visitors to, the area, and takes account of potential future growth in the area.
 6. Provide a framework for the delivery of targeted services that contribute directly to the development of sustainable, cohesive communities, improved health and well-being and increased opportunities for participation in both sport and informal recreation.
 7. Ensure the appropriate provision of accessible, high quality green space, sports and recreational facilities.
- 1.1.5 The PPS provides a holistic analysis of outdoor sports facilities across the study area, leading to a comprehensive set of recommendations for the future development of facilities, in line with the needs of local residents and sports clubs
- 1.1.6 The consultant team has worked with the Council to provide a strategy that is fit-for-purpose and addresses the specific issues and risks for the area. It is key that this Playing Pitch Strategy reflects the local context and enables the Council to maximise the amount of high-quality sporting provision for its residents, while understanding the need to meet planning and housing requirements. The Strategy will therefore aim to deliver against the following drivers:
8. Contribution to the WBDC planning process through identifying deficiencies and needs within the study area
 9. Inform and investment priorities and decisions which in turn can also help inform developer contribution decisions
 10. Align with sport and physical activity programmes that are currently being delivered across the region
 11. Recognition of the importance of outdoor physical activity and sport and the clear demonstration of how these should be prioritised within any development or regeneration

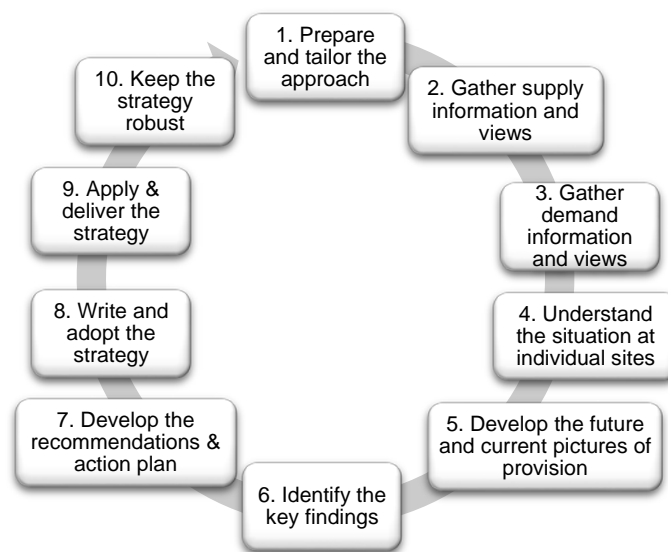
project;

12. Provision of an evidenced based approach and the management of a clear sign-off and governance structure for key stakeholders; and
13. Evidence to support a wider review into sport and physical activity provision, including housing and population growth projected in neighbouring local authorities.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 The assessment methodology utilised for the PPS follows the published guidance from Sport England. The guidance used is the 2013 version, Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance – An Approach to Developing and Delivering a Playing Pitch Strategy¹. Figure 1 summarises the approach proposed in this guidance and is broken down into 10 steps.

Figure 1.1: Developing and Delivering a Playing Pitch Strategy – The 10 Step Approach (Sport England, 2013)



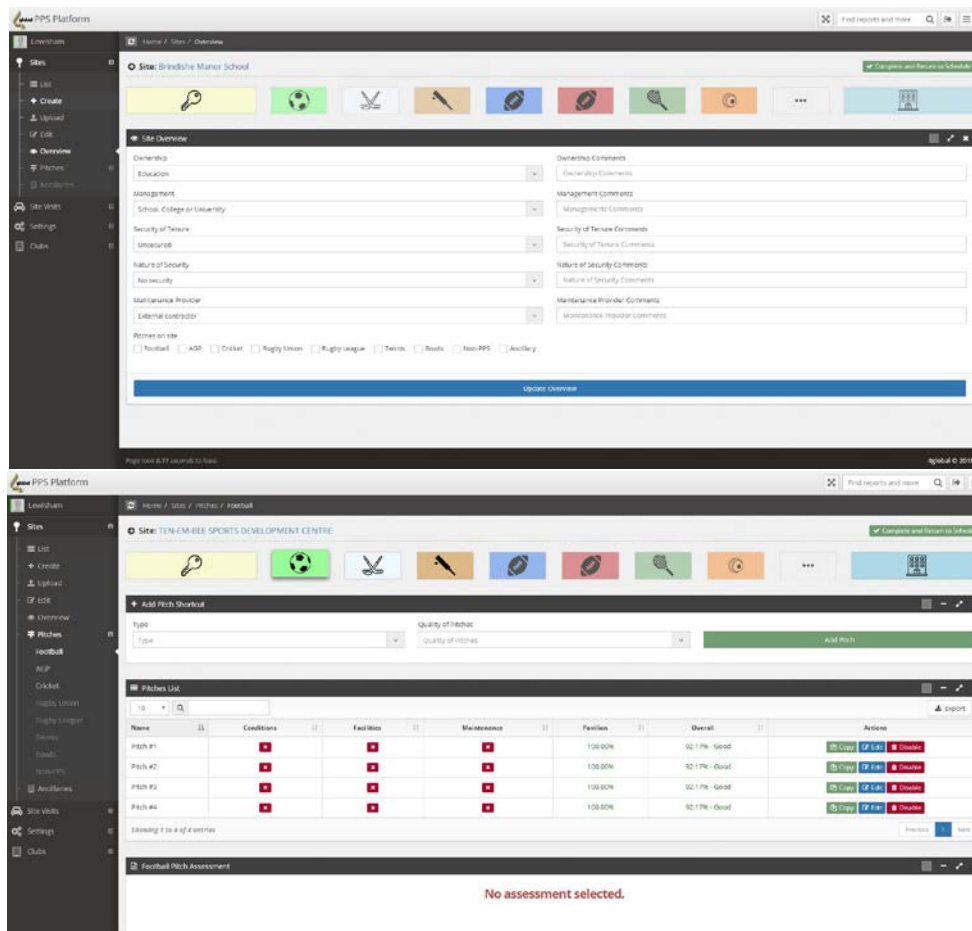
1.2.2 The findings in this report are based on data collected from several credible sources, including but not limited to;

14. Local authority and public policy strategic documentation;
15. Sport England tools, including the Facility Planning Model (FPM), Active Places Power, the Active People Survey, Market Segmentation and the Sports Facility CaWBDCulator;
16. Stakeholder consultation, including WBDC Officers, Sport England, Relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport, key user clubs; and
17. Site visits, undertaken at all sites across the Study Area.

1.2.3 To facilitate information gathering and help ensure PPS reports are based on a robust evidence base, 4global has developed an online data entry and assessment platform (see example below), which contains all site and club information. This will enable the Council to keep supply and demand information and the strategy up to date through to the end of the strategy and beyond.

¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/3522/pps-guidance-october-2013-updated.pdf>

Figure 1.2 - 4global's Online Playing Pitch Platform



1.2.4 A Project Steering Group comprising representation from the Council, Sport England and National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) has guided the study from its commencement. At critical milestones, the Steering Group members have reviewed and verified the data and information collected to allow the work to proceed efficiently through each stage.

1.3 The structure of the Strategy Document

1.3.1 The structure of the strategy document is as follows;

- 18. Section 1 – Introduction and Scope
- 19. Section 2 – Key Supply and Demand Findings
- 20. Section 3 – Scenario Testing and Options Appraisal
- 21. Section 4 – Recommendation and Action Plan
- 22. Section 5 - Delivering the PPS

1.3.2 In addition to the Strategy, a detailed needs assessment has also been produced, which provides a full evidence base for the analysis and a clear methodology for the project. The needs assessment contains a detailed strategic review of relevant local regional and national policy.

1.4 Strategic context

- 1.4.1 This section summarises the most important policies and context that impact upon the strategy and its interpretation. It also gives an overview of the demographics of the study area, which provides contextual background to sport participation and the need for provision now and in the future.
- 1.4.2 Sport specific strategies and policy documents published by NGBs are included within each sport's section to provide more relevant context to each sport.

1.5 National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 1.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the requirement of local authorities to establish and provide adequate and proper leisure facilities to meet local needs. Paragraphs 96 and 97 outline the planning policies for the provision and protection of sport and recreation facilities:

“Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate”.

- 1.5.2 Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
23. An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 24. The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 25. The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

Protection, Enhancement and Provision of facilities

- 1.5.3 The key drivers for the production of the strategy as advocated by Sport England are to protect, enhance and provide sports facilities, as follows²:
26. **Protect** sports from loss as a result of re-development
 27. **Enhance** existing facilities through improving their quality, accessibility and management
 28. **Provide** new facilities that are fit for purpose to meet demands for participation now and in the future.

1.6 Local Context- West Berkshire

- 1.6.1 West Berkshire makes up over half of the geographical area of the county of Berkshire - covering an area of 272sq². It lies on the western fringe of the South East region, centrally located, at a

² Further information is provided via Sport England's Planning Aims and Objectives guidance: <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/aims-and-objectives/>

crossroads where the South East meets the South West and where the south coast comes up to meet the southern Midlands. The expected midyear population for 2014 was 155,732.

- 1.6.2 The largest urban area in the district is Newbury and Thatcham (incl. Greenham and Speen), where around 66,000 (42%) of West Berkshire residents live. 25,941 or 17% of residents live in the suburban areas to the west of Reading District (Birch copse, Calcot, Purley and Westwood). Other significant Wards in the district are Bucklebury with just under 6,900 residents, Hungerford with just over 5,700 residents and Burghfield with just over 5,900 residents.
- 1.6.3 The average age of people in West Berkshire in 2014 was 40.4 years: slightly higher than the South East at 40.3 years of age and England at 39.6 years of age.
- 1.6.4 The district lies at the convergence of two key road arteries in the south – the M4 and the A34. Both provide direct road links in all directions, with all the key urban centers in southern England (London, Reading, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bristol, Oxford, and Swindon).
- 1.6.5 The district has good rail links, with London less than an hour by train and further connections, via Reading, to all the mainline routes throughout the country. The area also has very good links to international transport hubs: Heathrow and Southampton airport are 40 miles away, as are the ferry terminals in Southampton and Portsmouth, providing links with the continent.
- 1.6.6 Nearly three quarters of West Berkshire is classified as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a landscape of the highest national importance. Within the AONB the diversity and mix of landscapes ranges from the high large scale rolling chalk down land with its intensive arable farming, to small hamlets clustered along fast chalk streams, and floodplain with lush wetland vegetation associated with the River Kennet.
- 1.6.7 Nature Conservation: West Berkshire has 51 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are of national importance for the species of animal or plant life that they support or for their geology. In addition, there are three Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) which are of international importance and cover six of the district's SSSIs.
- 1.6.8 West Berkshire also has seven Local Geological Sites and around 500 Local Wildlife Sites which are of county importance but are essential to conserving biodiversity in the district. The Local Wildlife Sites amount to some 11% of the district or over 7,600 hectares, many of which are ancient semi-natural woodland.
- 1.6.9 West Berkshire has the 21st largest economy in England, characterized by low unemployment, above average wages, and abundance of jobs in technology and financial sectors. The presence of Vodafone has created a cluster of around 80 mobile phone related businesses in Newbury, while the Lambourn area is the second most important center for the racehorse industry in Great Britain. West Berkshire is also home to Atomic Weapons Establishments, in Aldermaston and Burghfield.
- 1.6.10 The current West Berkshire local plan covers up to 2026 with a period of review up to 2036. This review will look at future levels of needs of new homes, employment and other land used associated with infrastructure.
- 1.6.11 There are three main core elements that make up the local plan, these include:
 29. Strategy Development Plan Document (2006 – 2016)
 30. Housing Site Allocations Development Plan
 31. West Berkshire District Local Plan

1.7 Population and Demographic Analysis

1.7.1 The current and future population profile within West Berkshire and the locations of population growth are important to understand in planning for the future provision of sport and physical activity.

Population Projections

1.7.2 Table 2.1 below provides a summary of the key population and demographic trends for West Berkshire. The BPO is based upon the 2016-based ONS projection used by the Council.

Table 2.1: Population and demographics analysis for West Berkshire.

Sub Area	2018 (ONS)			2036 (ONS)		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
East Rural	8,237	8,036	16,273	8,709	8,440	17,149
East	24,646	25,059	49,706	26,057	26,318	52,376
West Rural	9,247	9,535	18,782	9,777	10,013	19,791
Thatcham and Newbury	37,207	37,839	75,046	39,337	39,740	79,078
Total	79,340	80,470	159,810	83,882	84,514	168,396

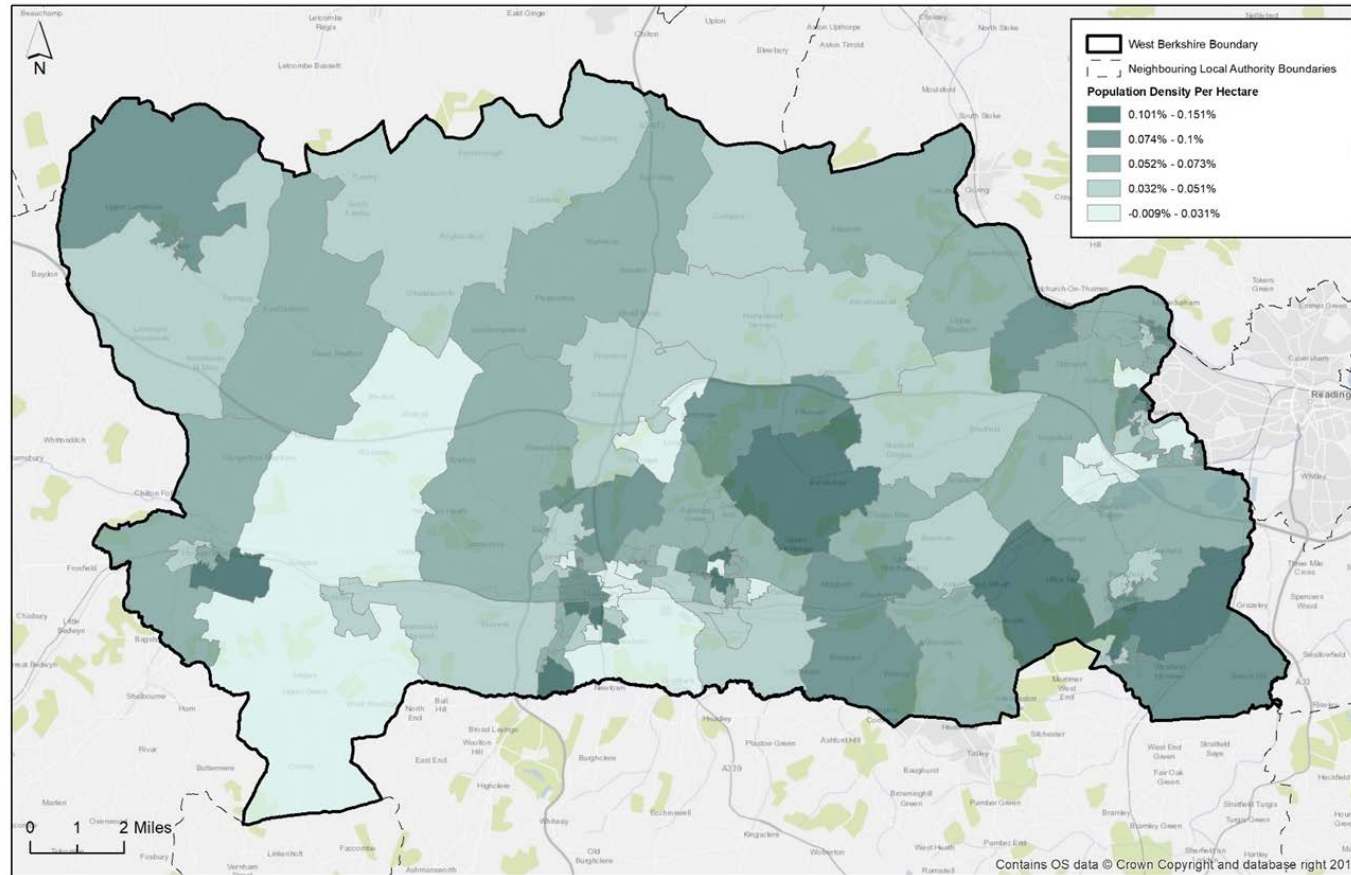
1.7.3 To provide greater detail on the specific trends and local population characteristics, table 2.2 provides an overall summary of the West Berkshire's demographic profile.

Table 2.2: Summary of West Berkshire's demographic profile – population, deprivation, health and sporting assets

Analysis area	Commentary
Locality Description	West Berkshire makes up over the half geographic area of the county of Berkshire. The district lies at the convergence of two key road arteries in the south (M4 and the A34). The district also has good rail links to London and the south. West Berkshire has the 21 st largest economy in England.
Population Profile	The current population is stated as 159,810 in 2018 with this expected to grow to 168,396 in 2036. The overall trend in population is indicating an aging population with the 60+ age bracket showing the largest increase with the 20-59 band decreasing by 0.8% over the lifespan of the strategy.
Market Segmentation	The highest market segmentation group is stated to be Prestige Positions at 16.9% with country living close behind at 15.9%. Both of these segments indicate a high standard of living with car ownership and home owning.
Spatial Distribution of Population	Overall there is a concentration of population located near and inside the larger towns within the District such as Newbury and Thatcham. This is to be expected due to the economic factors from within these areas. There are also higher concentrations as you go further east towards Reading and Wokingham.
Deprivation	Only one LSOA being within the top 20% of most deprived lower super output areas in the country. This is incredibly good and shows a degree of affluence for the District. Most areas of Newbury and further east towards Reading are the LSOAs with the least deprivation possibly due to the economic opportunities within these areas.
Health and Inactivity	There are large portions of the District which have a risk of being inactive due to the population in the area and also their accessibility to local sporting provision and facilities. In order for a healthier population these areas of inactivity should be address such as to the west and north west of the District (rural areas)
Overall Implications for Future Sports Facility Provision	With the continued growth in population along with the housing developing being built in the surrounding areas it is important to have a viable and feasible sports facility provision strategy.

1.7.4 Map 1 below illustrates the population change throughout the study area over the life span of the strategy. As shown below there is concentrated growth around the central and eastern parts of the District located in Newbury/Thatcham and towards Wokingham.

Map 1: Population Change in West Berkshire (2018 - 2036)

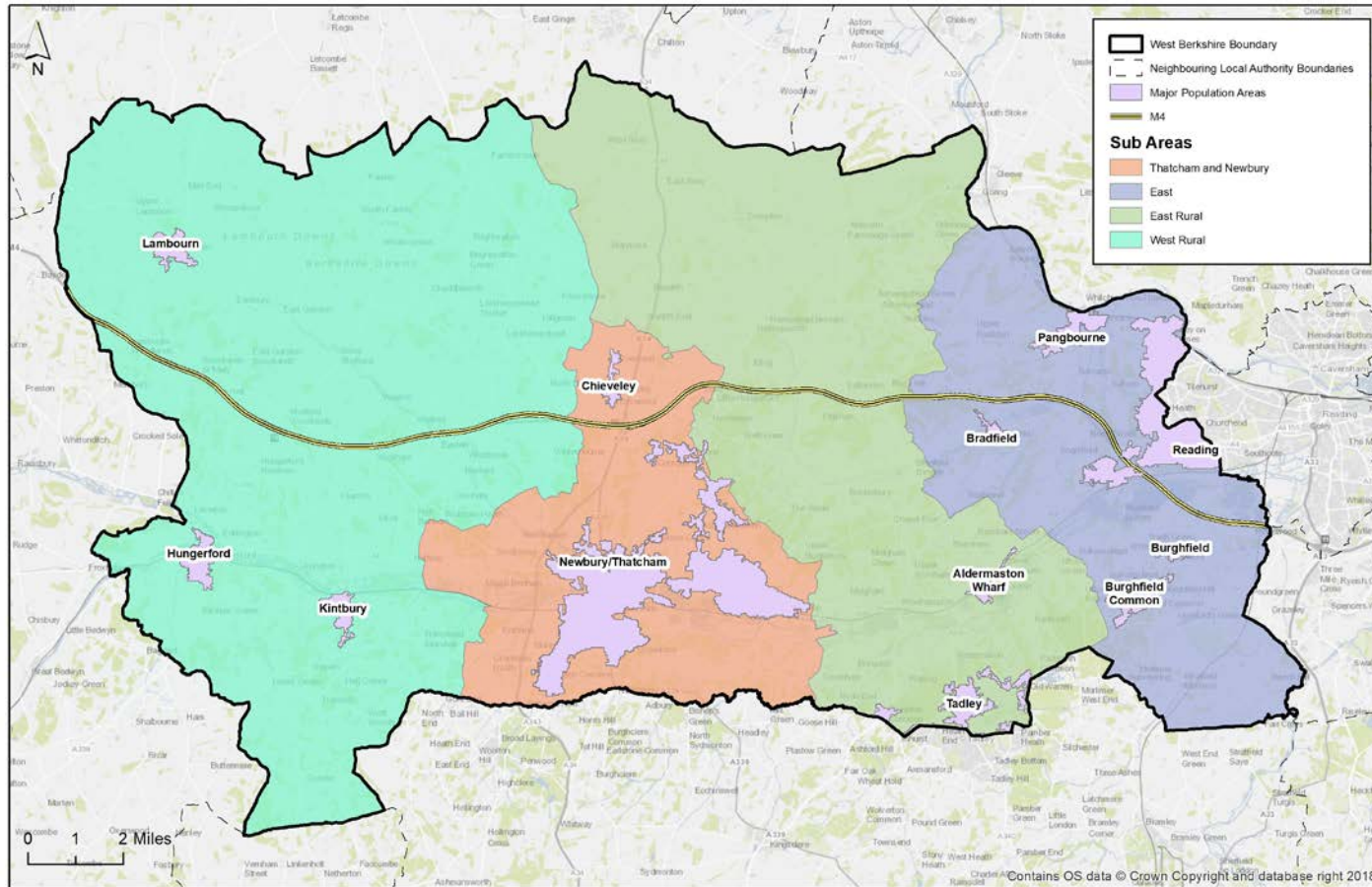


Percentage Change in Population (2018 – 2036) by Lower Super Output Area in West Berkshire



1.7.5 Map 2 illustrates the major population towns within West Berkshire as well as sub areas.

Map 2: Population hubs and sub areas within West Berkshire.



Population Areas and Sub Areas within West Berkshire



1.8 Physical Activity and Participation

The Value of Participation

- 1.8.1 The value of participation in sport and physical activity is significant, and its contribution to individual and community quality of life should not be under-estimated. This is true for both younger and older people; participation in sport and physical activity delivers:
- 32. Opportunities for physical activity, and therefore more ‘active living’
 - 33. Health benefits - cardio-vascular, stronger bones, increased mobility
 - 34. Health improvement
 - 35. Mental health benefits
 - 36. Social benefits – socialization, communication, interaction, regular contact, stimulation
- 1.8.2 In addition, participation in sport and physical activity can facilitate the learning of new skills, development of individual and team ability/performance, and provide a ‘disciplined’ environment in which participants can ‘grow’ and develop.
- 1.8.3 The benefits of regular and active participation in sport and physical activity will be important to promote in relation to future sport, leisure and physical activity in West Berkshire. There is an existing audience in the District, which already recognise the advantages of participation, and a latent community who are ready to take part. The sport, physical activity and leisure offer in the District can support the delivery of the desired outcomes across a number of District Strategic priorities and objectives.

1.9 Participation Trends and Rates

Current Participation Rates across West Berkshire

- 1.9.1 In terms of the Public Health England definition for physical activity (150 minutes or equivalent of at least moderate intensity activity per week) 14.8% of adults are doing enough physical activity to benefit their health (i.e. exercising three or more times per week), which is above the national average of 17.5%.
- 1.9.2 The Sport England Active Lives survey shows that participation levels are consistently higher than the regional and national levels. As the Active Lives survey is a new way of measuring physical activity (following the replacement of Active People in 2015), there are only two datasets available for analysis. While this makes trend analysis difficult, Table 2.3 below shows that West Berkshire is slightly higher the regional and national figures for physical activity. For inactivity West Berkshire is both lower than the national average and the South East average of 24.4%.

Table 2.3: Sport England Active Lives – proportion of ‘Active’ people (150+ minutes a week).

Rate	West Berkshire	South East	England
% Active	61.6 %	59.0%	57.0 %
% Inactive	24.4 %	25.4 %	28.7 %

2 Key supply and demand findings

- 2.1.1 This section summarises the key findings identified within the need's assessment, which should be used as the evidence base for this strategy. A comprehensive supply and demand analysis have been undertaken for all sports across the study area, with the project steering group engaged at all stages of the process.
- 2.1.2 The following section provides a summary of the key findings for each of the sports analysed within the main report. The format of these tables follows the five key questions that are asked as part of the PPS Guidance Document for Stages A – C of the process.

2.2 Football key findings

Table 3.1 – Key PPS findings for football in West Berkshire

Key Question	Analysis
What are the main characteristics of the current supply and demand for provision?	<p>The quality of football provision across the area is standard and appears to have stayed at a consistent level over the past years, with 69% of the 183 pitches assessed scoring in the Standard quality rating or above.</p> <p>There are 84 football sites in West Berkshire, of which 30% (26) are owned by WBDC. The highest proportion of management type is educational establishments – 42% of all football sites.</p> <p>The level of demand has also stayed relatively consistent, with a current total of 322 teams, the majority of which are within the Junior and Mini Soccer age groups.</p> <p>Both the supply and demand for football facilities is dominated by the East and Newbury and Thatcham sub-areas, which are home to the majority of the large clubs, as well as a number of the strategic football sites.</p>
Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet current demand	<p>The current supply and demand analysis for secured and accessible pitch provision shows there is a large deficit across West Berkshire, this is due to the very low level of football provision across the area that is secured for long term community use (only 24%). This deficit is particularly clear within the East and Newbury and Thatcham sub areas and happens for all pitch typologies in both current and future scenarios.</p> <p>There is a significant deficit of 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) provision in the area, with only one full sized 3G pitch available to the community (at Park House School) and a requirement to increase provision. There is a deficit of 7 full sized 3G AGP's currently, based on FA calculations of 38 teams per 3G AGP.</p>
Is the provision that is accessible of sufficient quality and appropriately maintained?	<p>The majority of pitches (69%) are rated as standard quality or higher and receive adequate maintenance to retain pitch quality. A total of 28 pitches in West Berkshire are rated good quality. However, there are 57 pitches in the study area that are rated as poor quality – The majority of these pitches are located within the East (23) and Newbury and Thatcham (20) sub areas. There are ten sites operating over-capacity and improvement to the quality and maintenance of these pitches is required.</p>
What are the main characteristics of the future supply and demand for provision	<p>Team Generation Rates (TGR) calculations show that due to a projected decrease in population within the relevant age groups for football, there is expected to be a potential loss of 14 teams during the life of the strategy – all of these in the Youth Football and Mini Soccer age groups and in the East and Newbury and Thatcham Sub Areas.</p>

Key Question	Analysis
	However, during the consultation process with local clubs, latent demand for a total of 45 teams was identified across West Berkshire.
Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet future demand	<p>The future supply and demand analysis for secured and accessible pitch provision shows there is a significant deficit for all pitch typologies across West Berkshire.</p> <p>Spatially, the sub-area with the highest future projected deficit of supply is the East sub-area, which is largely caused by the lack of secured provision (both in this sub area and across West Berkshire in general) and the high level of demand generated from some of the larger clubs in the study area. There is also a large deficit of Mini 5v5 provision, with no secured provision at all across all four sub areas.</p>

2.3 Cricket key findings

2.3.1 This section summarises the findings from the cricket analysis, which will form the basis of the recommendation and action plan section for West Berkshire.

Table 3.2 – Key PPS findings for cricket in West Berkshire

Key Question	Analysis
What are the main characteristics of the current supply and demand for provision?	<p>There are 39 cricket sites in West Berkshire - 36 sites are available to the community and 20 have secured community access. Ownership of cricket sites is split across the study area, with the majority being Local Authority/Parish Council owned (10), followed by Private (9) and Education (8) owned sites.</p> <p>The majority of pitches (31) in West Berkshire were deemed Standard or higher as part of the site assessments. There are seven pitches of good quality – these are the ones at Elstree School, Bradfield Playing Field, Thatcham Town Cricket Club and Falkland Cricket Club. However, there is a high proportion of pitches (24 in total) that were deemed Poor, with the majority of these located in the East sub area, and the lowest scoring pitch in West Berkshire being the one at Yattendon & Frilsham Cricket Club.</p> <p>The clubs with the largest number of cricket teams in West Berkshire are Thatcham Town CC (21 teams), Falkland CC (12 teams), Purley on Thames CC (10 teams) and West Ilsley CC (10 teams). There is a total of 96 teams and 14 clubs identified as playing in West Berkshire.</p>
Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet current demand	<p>There are a total of 10 sites (25% of the total) within West Berkshire with unsecure community use. However, no formal cricket demand was recorded as part of this study at the majority of these sites, in addition to the majority of cricket sites in West Berkshire being under capacity. This demonstrates that there is sufficient, accessible and secured, community use of existing provision to meet current demand within the area.</p> <p>It should be noted that, although the analysis shows an overall surplus of secured capacity across West Berkshire, the East sub area shows a deficit for secured pitches in both current and future scenarios. In the West Rural sub area, there is no secured artificial wicket provision.</p>
Is the provision that is accessible of sufficient quality and appropriately maintained?	<p>Overall, the provision is of adequate quality, with 56% of the sites across West Berkshire scoring a quality rating of Standard or Good.</p> <p>Facilities in the Newbury & Thatcham sub-area scored particularly highly. In contrast, the East sub-area accounts for the largest amount of Poor pitches in West Berkshire.</p> <p>Maintenance is largely undertaken by individual clubs, either through the use of a paid groundsman or through club volunteers. There are also a number of sites that are owned and managed by the local authority or parish council, which typically scored lower in the site assessment.</p> <p>Clubs have identified a need to improve practice net facilities and ancillary provision</p>

Key Question	Analysis
What are the main characteristics of the future supply and demand for provision	<p>With the projected decrease in population across the area in the relevant cricket age groups, there is a slight decrease in cricket demand expected in West Berkshire by 2036, with the TGR calculations projecting a potential loss of two adult teams in the East and Newbury and Thatcham sub areas.</p> <p>The future supply of community-accessible cricket facilities is relatively secure and future scenarios undertaken as part of the study have shown that there is enough capacity to accommodate future demand in West Berkshire. However, the very low level of secured provision in the East sub area is likely to worsen the current deficit in secured provision within the sub area by 2036. It is recommended for the Council to work with sites and clubs in this sub area, and across West Berkshire, to establish long-term community use agreements and secure future provision.</p>

2.4 Rugby key findings

2.4.1 This section summarises the findings from the rugby analysis, which will form the basis of the recommendation and action plan section for West Berkshire.

Table 3.3 – Key PPS findings for rugby in West Berkshire

Key Question	Analysis
What are the main characteristics of the current supply and demand for provision?	<p>There are 17 sites in West Berkshire comprising rugby pitches, 12 of these are located at educational establishments and 10 out of the 17 are available for community use.</p> <p>The quality of provision across West Berkshire for rugby is adequate, with the majority of playing pitches rated Standard and with natural adequate drainage. There are 10 poor pitches across West Berkshire, all located at education sites that are not currently used by community rugby clubs.</p> <p>The demand for rugby is relatively strong, with five clubs of varying sizes playing in the area. Newbury RFC is the largest club in the area (with 26 teams in total), followed by Tadley RFC (18 teams) and Hungerford RFC (15 teams).</p>
Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet current demand	There is a significant deficit for secured and accessible rugby provision across West Berkshire, with current and future analysis showing an undersupply of available and secured grass pitches. This is due mainly to the high level of unsecured provision at educational establishments. It should also be noted that the key rugby club sites are also operating significantly over capacity, given that all of club demand is currently on these sites and generally rugby clubs prefer to focus meeting their needs on club sites even if capacity is available on school sites to avoid fragmentation.
Is the provision that is accessible of sufficient quality and appropriately maintained?	The maintenance regime for non-education sites across West Berkshire is adequate, however it does not currently ensure that pitches are fit for purpose and able to withstand the high levels of demand for rugby. Additional pitches and facilities are required at existing club sites, as well as increased and improved maintenance and drainage in order to increase carrying capacity across West Berkshire. New potential 3G AGP (WR22) pitches should also be addressed to ease the amount of demand on certain grass pitches and also enhance the training provision in the study area, especially with the increase in the female game.
What are the main characteristics of the future supply and demand for provision	TGR calculations show a potential loss of two Mini/Midi teams by a projected decrease in population in these age groups. However, major clubs revealed during consultation that they are expecting further growth in coming years.
Is there enough accessible and secured community	Based on club consultations, the future demand for rugby is projected to increase across the area, with the deficit for secured rugby provision likely to increase further over the lifetime of the strategy. Further capacity is required to

Key Question	Analysis
use provision to meet future demand	meet the current and future needs of local residents. Additional grass pitches, as well as additional floodlit training facilities are required to meet current and future club needs. Especially at major club sites such as Henwick Worth Sports Ground which have a large amount of supply on site.

2.5 Hockey key findings

2.5.1 This section summarises the findings from the hockey analysis, which will form the basis of the recommendation and action plan section for West Berkshire.

Table 3.4 – Key PPS findings for hockey in West Berkshire

Key Question	Analysis
What are the main characteristics of the current supply and demand for provision?	<p>The quality of hockey provision across West Berkshire is adequate, with all pitches in the area identified as Standard or higher on assessment.</p> <p>The main hockey facility in the area, however, scored in the lower end of the Standard category during the assessment and support is required for the resurfacing/replacement of the current AGP. This is the Henwick Worthy Sports Ground site, which is home to Newbury & Thatcham Hockey Club and their 23 teams.</p> <p>The facility at Trinity Academy is also utilized by Newbury & Thatcham HC for junior hockey events and tournaments and Scarlett Runners – the other hockey club that operates within West Berkshire – only play friendly fixtures from the Bradfield College facility.</p>
Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet current demand	There is only one site for hockey provision in West Berkshire that is secured for community use, but currently has no formal demand (John O’Gaunt School) This is due to the majority of AGPs in the area being located at educational establishments that do not have long-term community use agreements in place. The Henwick Worthy Sports Ground site was also identified as unsecured provision during site assessment, and it is recommended for WBDC to work with the Hockey Club on site to agree on a formal long-term usage agreement.
Is the provision that is accessible of sufficient quality and appropriately maintained?	<p>The quality of hockey facilities that are available to the community across the area is adequate.</p> <p>The AGPs at Bradfield College are relatively new and of very high quality, whilst the pitches at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground and John O’Gaunt school were identified as Standard, showing signs of aging and suffering from damage to the surface.</p>
What are the main characteristics of the future supply and demand for provision	<p>Future demand for hockey in West Berkshire is not expected to change significantly during the life of the strategy, with TGR calculations showing the potential creation of 1 additional adult team due to a slight increase in population within this age group. In consultation with Newbury & Thatcham HC, the club also stated that they are expecting to convert latent demand of 2 senior teams and 1 junior team into affiliated demand within the next three years.</p> <p>The supply of hockey provision in West Berkshire is also expected to change, with Henwick Worthy Sports Ground and John O’Gaunt School expressing during consultation their intentions to develop additional AGPs at their sites,</p>
Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet future demand	<p>The analysis shows that the projected increase in demand can be satisfied by the existing available provision in the area if additional demand is brought about at Henwick Worthy or another relevant site to cope with the latent demand.</p> <p>However, the development of an additional AGP at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground would be beneficial as it would allow Newbury & Thatcham HC to</p>

Key Question	Analysis
	continue growing whilst providing an accessible and sustainable model for hockey, with the club playing all of its current and future hockey at one single site and also allow Berkshire County Hockey Association to play matches when available.

Section 3: Scenario testing and options appraisal



3 Scenario testing and options appraisal

- 3.1.1 The supply and demand analysis undertaken in each of the previous sections provides a clear view of the capacity for sports facilities across West Berkshire, based on the existing supply of facilities and the demand for these facilities from residents, both now and in the future.
- 3.1.2 This data provides an accurate evidence base, on which future planning and investment decisions can be made, using the guidelines outlines in the 'Delivering the Strategy' chapter of the strategy.
- 3.1.3 To complement the analysis that has been undertaken in each of the sport-specific sections, this chapter contains detailed further analysis on a small number of key scenarios, which have been identified by the project steering group throughout the development of the PPS.
- 3.1.4 For each of the scenarios identified below, a short summary is provided to explain why the scenario needs to be tested. Following this, a needs assessment for each of the relevant facility types is undertaken and explained.

3.2 Scenario 1: Removing school sites with secured community use availability

- 3.2.1 A common theme throughout the country is that of clubs using school sites for their match day or training provision. This is a regular occurrence throughout the age groups from mini to adult leagues.
- 3.2.2 Traditionally schools and football clubs have historic links in the local area, but this is becoming less apparat due to the change in school systems and also the growth of clubs in terms of team numbers and various ages groups.
- 3.2.3 It is important to consider the playing pitch provision when considering the removal of education sites as typically they do not have a long-term community use agreement or secured tenure. The main sport this will be a focus for is football, as currently there is no formal match day demand for rugby union within West Berkshire.
- 3.2.4 As identified through stakeholder consultation, ensuring all available sites also have security of tenure for future football provision is vital for the sustainability and growth of football within the study area and in regard to supply and demand in West Berkshire.
- 3.2.5 As highlighted in table 3.1 below, this scenario significantly changes the supply and demand picture for grass provision, with a deficit of -27.5 match equivalents by removing educational sites from the available provision, there is a further deficit when looking at secured provision of -107.5 match equivalents when removing all educational facilities. This deficit is further compounded when looking at future population rates and taking into account latent demand. There is deficit across all age groups throughout the District.
- 3.2.6 This shows the importance that educational facilities have on the overall football demand in the District and the importance of constructing community links and agreements between schools and football clubs.

Balance per Pitch Type	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Scenario 1 - Sites with community use availability with no educational sites						
Total supply	47	18	21	17	8	111
Total demand	40	28.5	27	26.5	16.5	138.5
Balance	7	-10.5	-6	-9.5	-8.5	-27.5
Scenario 2 - Sites that are secured for community use with no educational sites (2018)						
Total supply	17	7	2	5	0	31
Total demand	40	28.5	27	26.5	16.5	138.5
Balance	-23	-21.5	-25	-21.5	-16.5	-107.5
Scenario 3 - Future Analysis for all sites available to the community with no educational sites (2033)						
Total supply	47	18	21	17	8	111
Additional Demand from TGR	0	0.5	-3.5	-2.5	-2	-7.5
Additional demand from latent demand	6.5	6	6	2	2	21.5
Total demand (TGR and Latent demand)	46.5	35	29.5	26	16.5	152.5
Balance	0.5	-17	-8.5	-9	-8.5	-41.5
Scenario 5 - Future analysis for all secured sites with no educational sites (2033)						
Total supply	17	7	2	5	0	31
Additional Demand from TGR	0	0.5	-3.5	-2.5	-2	-7.5
Additional demand from latent demand	6.5	6	6	2	2	21.5
Total demand (TGR and Latent demand)	46.5	35	29.5	26	16.5	152.5
Balance	-29.5	-28	-27.5	-21	-16.5	-121.5

Figure 3.1: Football provision with no educational sites available within West Berkshire

3.3 Scenario 2: Reconfiguring Adult football provision to Youth 11v11 and Youth 9v9

3.3.1 Due to the growth in youth 11v11 in the future supply analysis and the current lack of appropriate provision, the recommendation section of this strategy identifies a need to re-configure pitches to meet this demand.

- 3.3.2 This scenario assumes that the security of tenure remains consistent with that over the needs assessment and considers educational sites being available.
- 3.3.3 To address the deficit of youth 11v11 provision and youth 9v9, it is assumed that 19 of 59 of the adult pitches are re-marked as youth 11v11 and 9v9 provision, leaving 40 adult pitches. This results in a reduction in the deficit of youth 11v11 provision however it does not have any impact on the total deficit as no new pitches will be created.
- 3.3.4 Even with this reconfiguration of pitches there is still a deficit when conducting future analysis due to latent demand and future TGR rates within the study area.

Balance per Pitch Type	Adult	Yth 11v11	Yth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Current Supply and Demand of available sites with educational sites (2018)						
Total supply (no. of pitches)	59	22	17	34	28	160
Total demand	40	28.5	27	26.5	16.5	138.5
Balance (total)	19	-6.5	-10	7.5	11.5	21.5
Scenario 1: Future Analysis of all available sites to the community with pitch reconfiguration (2036)						
Total supply (no.of pitches)	40	31	27	34	28	160
Change in number of pitches	-19	9	10	no change	no change	N/A
Current demand	40	28.5	27	26.5	16.5	138.5
Additional demand from TGR	0	0.5	-3.5	-2.5	-2	-7.5
Latent demand	6.5	6	6	2	2	21.5
Total demand	46.5	35	29.5	26	16.5	152.5
Balance	-6.5	-4	-2.5	8	11.5	7.5

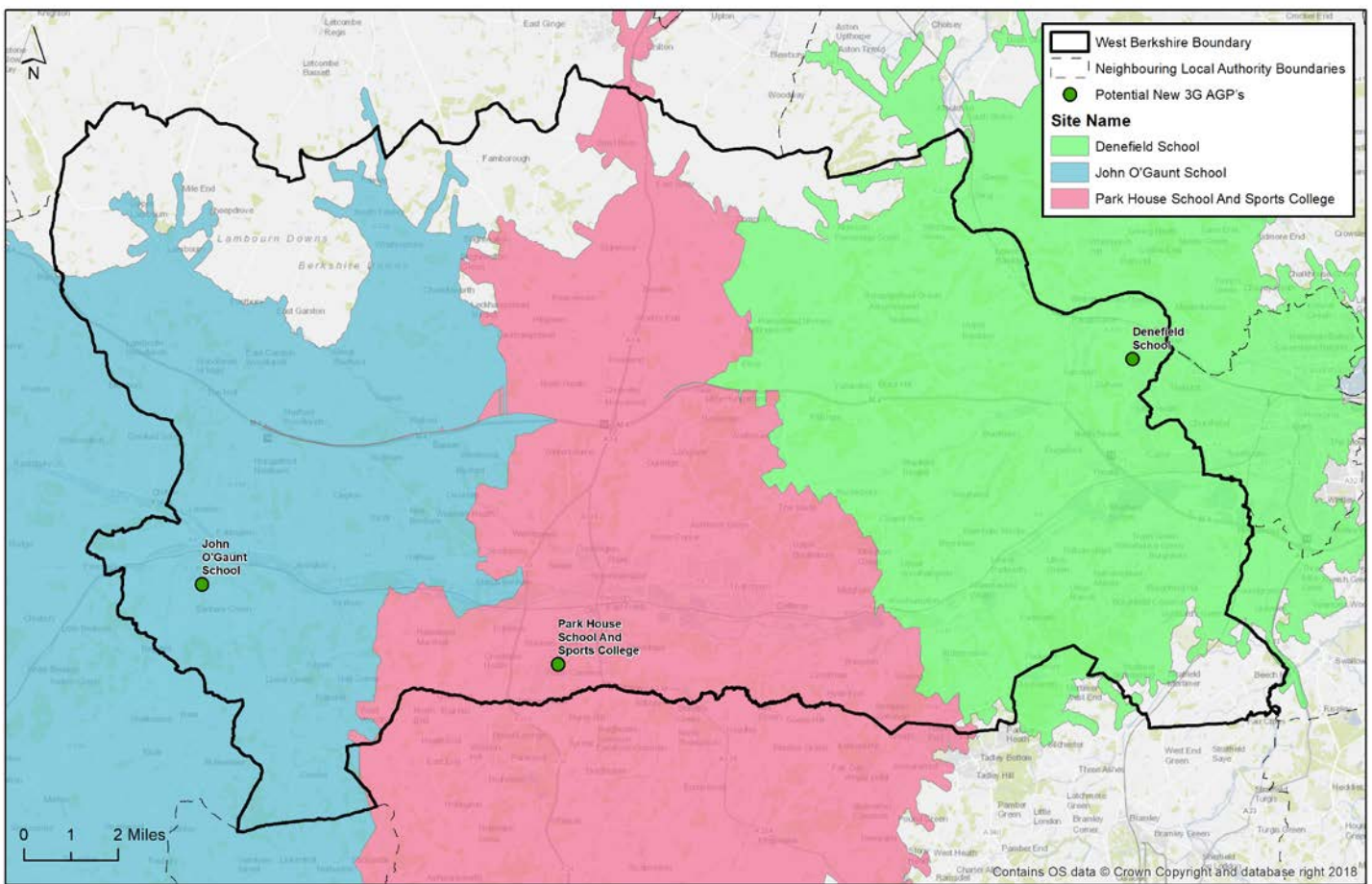
3.4 Scenario 3: Potential 3G AGP provision

- 3.4.1 As identified in the previous consultations and stakeholder and the needs assessment document, there is a current deficit of 3G AGP's within the study area with community use availability, which is reducing the ability of residents to utilise high-quality artificial grass facilities, which has been proved to be a popular and sustainable pitch type across the rest of the UK.

- 3.4.2 The study area currently has one full sized 3G AGP located at Park House School. The facility is also not listed on the FA 3G Register, and therefore not eligible for any match play. This pitch is available for community use and used heavily through periods of peak demand (weekday evenings and weekends). The facility is also floodlit and therefore can be used by the community at peak times throughout the winter. However, it has been identified as having a poor surface quality which should be improved in order to meet current and future demand.
- 3.4.3 As part of the PPS assessment and consultation process, a number of sites have been identified as potential locations for 3G AGP investment. This scenario tests the potential impact of two of these sites and evaluates the potential success of investment programmes with community links to local clubs.
- 3.4.4 When selecting the sites that are appropriate for 3G AGP development, sites should have the following characteristics;
37. Be available for significant use by local community clubs
 38. Have good access and ancillary facilities to service the pitch(es)
 39. Be financially sustainable
 40. Be able to be maximised for training and match play provision during peak time
 41. Be well positioned to deliver wider football development programmes, including coach education and a recreational football offer, using spare off-peak capacity to deliver this
 42. Be able to explore shared projects with the Rugby Football Union (RFU), Rugby Football League (RFL) and school sites where infrastructure and vision align.
- 3.4.5 The two sites that have been chosen (on a without prejudice basis) for this analysis are identified below, along with the justification for selection. It is important to note that these two sites must have a community use agreement with local clubs in order to sustain their viability and usefulness to the local community. These sites were selected over other site due to their location within the district in relation to population centers and club locations.
43. **Denefield School:** The site currently is used by local football teams such as Westwood Wanderers so there is a community use link with the school at present. The school is in support of building a new 3G AGP pitch on site which they would agree to providing long term community use agreements with to local clubs. This will allow the eastern portion of the study area to be served by a 3G AGP.
 44. **John O’Gaunt School:** This site is located in the western portion of the study area so will serve a different cross section of the community. There are two options of this site of resurfacing the current poor sand based AGP to 3G or constructing a new 3G AGP on site. The current pitch is heavily used by local football clubs. Little housing or development in the immediate area would allow for easier planning permission. This site could also be a potential WR22 compliant surface for training depending on funding requirements and allocations due to Hungerford RFC being located close by.

- 3.4.6 Map 3.1 below shows a potential catchment map, should 3G facilities be installed at Denefield School and John O’Gaunt School with the existing 3G AGP being shown also at Park House School.
- 3.4.7 These specific locations have potential risk associated with them in terms of planning issues and public consultation, however they provide the greatest potential opportunity to improve the overall provision within West Berkshire and provide secure local links to clubs.

Map 3.1: 3G AGP catchment analysis for scenario 3



Potential New Full Size 3G AGPs within West Berkshire including the current supply



Section 4: Strategic recommendations and action plan



4 Strategic recommendations and action plan

- 4.1.1 To facilitate the development of sport and physical activity across West Berkshire, it is advised that the Steering Group, set up as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy project, continues to work together to deliver the recommendations defined as part of this strategy.
- 4.1.2 This section of the report provides a set of strategic recommendations, to guide future governance and investment into pitch sport provision across the study area.

4.2 Strategic recommendations

- 4.2.1 This section brings together the complete evidence base and analysis that has been developed as part of the PPS and provides a clear strategy for the future delivery of sports provision in West Berkshire.
- 4.2.2 At a strategic level, the following key recommendations have been identified for each of the sport typologies, as well as for general sports provision.

General recommendations

- 45. **Recommendation 1:** Work with well-run sports clubs to utilise the existing volunteer network across West Berkshire and providing more autonomy for clubs, allowing those organisations that have adequate governance and financial stability to develop facilities and participation.
- 46. **Recommendation 2:** Address the issue of poor ancillary and changing pavilion quality, as identified through the site assessments, through the refurbishment and replacement of existing ancillary facilities, prioritising those on multi-pitch sites that are currently well used. Utilise the action plan to identify specific sites for development.
- 47. **Recommendation 3:** Enhance the drainage and maintenance of pitches that are currently operating over-capacity, to increase the pitch capacity to accommodate demand of current user clubs, especially on council or town/parish council-maintained pitches. Utilise the action plan to identify specific sites for development.
- 48. **Recommendation 4:** Work with clubs based at council owned sites, to establish long-term security use agreements, ensuring that clubs and participants have security of tenure and are able to grow and develop through grant funding wider investment with incorporating multi sports at sites where applicable.
- 49. **Recommendation 5:** Develop links between NGB's and clubs to provide training and maintenance support for pitch improvements.
- 50. **Recommendation 6:** Work with educational establishments that provide playing pitches for use by community teams, through artificial provision, to secure formal

community use of pitches and ancillary facilities through a Community Use Agreement. Where these community use agreements currently exist, work with education establishments and users to ensure that requirements for community use are being enforced.

51. **Recommendation 7:** Work with local town/parish councils and NGB's to subsidise where appropriate pitch training courses for local members as well as encouraging cost share programs with maintenance equipment.

Football

52. **Recommendation 8:** Ensure sites that have current community use available also have security of tenure to protect the future provision of football, supporting clubs based on council sites to apply for grants and investments from various governing bodies and schemes. Encourage the site owners to apply for funding schemes to improve facilities.
53. **Recommendation 9:** A number of sites are close to a poor-quality rating throughout the District so better maintenance regimes will be required to increase the overall carrying capacity of sites.
54. **Recommendation 10:** Reconfigure Adult pitches to Youth 11v11 and 9v9 in the sub areas that are currently showing a future secured deficit of youth pitches in conjunction with parish/town councils where needs have been identified.
55. **Recommendation 11:** Increase the number of community available and secured 3G AGP's within the District (full size). There is currently a large shortfall of accessible sites.
56. **Recommendation 12:** Reconfigure a portion adult pitches to mini pitches in all sub areas in order to reduce the future deficit.

Cricket

57. **Recommendation 13:** There are only 7 good rated pitches within the study area. Further investment and improved maintenance programmes are needed, especially on council and parish/town owned pitches, to improve this quality rating of both the pitches and outfields.
58. **Recommendation 14:** Increase future secured tenured in sub areas which indicate a current and future deficit (East) and also secure artificial wicket provision in the West Rural sub area.
59. **Recommendation 15:** Improvement of external practice net facilities as well as

ancillary provisions on local authority sites.

60. **Recommendation 16:** Work with local/parish and town council to encourage better pitch maintenance programs as well as working with club members to partake in designated maintenance courses.

Rugby

61. **Recommendation 17:** Secure long-term community use agreements between schools and clubs in order to maximise capacity and allow further training provision.
62. **Recommendation 18:** Secure long-term security agreements between council site (Henwick Worthy) and clubs in order for clubs to then apply for grants and funding from external partners.
63. **Recommendation 19:** Increase the pitch maintenance and investment at large club sites as a number of these are currently at capacity and the carrying capacity of pitches need to be increased.
64. **Recommendation 20:** New potential 3G AGP (WR22) pitches should also be addressed to ease the amount of demand on certain grass pitches and also enhance the training provision in the study area, especially with the increase in the female game (Planning permissions was agreed upon for Newbury RFC in 2009).
65. **Recommendation 21:** Further flood lit provision should be provided for educational and council sites in order to increase training capacity subject to planning.

Hockey

66. **Recommendation 22:** Establish long term community use agreements with educational facilities to provide school and club links throughout the study area.
67. **Recommendation 23:** Newbury and Thatcham HC to work with the local council to provide a long-term agreement for the use of Henwick Worthy Sports Ground or similar site.
68. **Recommendation 24:** Development of one sand based AGP to order to sustain the current and future demand of hockey provision within the study area with a long-term use agreement.

4.3 Action plan

- 4.3.1 Through a detailed supply and demand analysis of the sports included in the scope of the strategy, as well as stakeholder consultations across the study area, an action plan has been created, which will guide the steering group in their delivery of sports provision and facility

decisions over the next 15 years. The action plan is broken down by site with clear owners, timescales and expected resources. This is shown Table 4.1 through 4.4.

4.3.2 The table identifies potential sources of external funding. It should be noted that funding for the actions below could come from one, or a combination, of funding sources shown below. This is not an exhaustive list and could be extended to other sources, depending on availability.

- 69. CIL monies
- 70. Section 106 funding
- 71. Community Grant Schemes

4.3.3 The Action Plan does not identify all those clubs that may be partners or provide resources in relation to its delivery. It is assumed that where clubs have a long-standing interest in a specific site that they will be a partner in delivering the actions and contribute financially or in-kind where appropriate.

4.3.4 The Action Plan does not identify West Berkshire District Council as a key resource either in terms of officer time or finance, except for those sites owned and/or managed by the Council. However, the Council has an interest in all those projects delivered within the local authority area and may contribute towards them either financially or in-kind, as appropriate and subject to available resources. It should be noted that not all sites have actions allocated to them, as it is unrealistic to expect funding partners to contribute to improvements at all facilities across a local authority.

Action plan terminology

- 72. Issue/ opportunity: The issue or opportunity that can be addressed.
- 73. Key Actions: Numbering indicates order of preference.
- 74. Partners: Top listed partner is identified as lead partner.
- 75. Resources: Key resource implications (time and money).
- 76. Timescale: Short: 0–2 yrs. Medium: 2-5 yrs. Long 5-10 yrs.
- 77. Priority: Low, Medium and High, depending on overall impact for sports participation
- 78. Acronyms: WBDC (West Berkshire Council), FA (Football Association), FF (Football Foundation), ECB (England & Wales Cricket Board), EH (England Hockey), RFU (Rugby Football Union).

4.3.5 All costs are estimated, based on 4global desktop research, the most up to date Sport England Facility Cost Guidance (available at the time of the development of the PPS) and consultation with industry experts. These are not based on firm pricing or quotes from reputable contractors, unless stated otherwise.

4.3.6 All maintenance costs represent the full cost for maintaining the pitches. They do not, therefore, reflect any maintenance that is currently being undertaken at the site and the cost incurred for these services. In reality, the cost for additional maintenance would be reflected by an increase of the current maintenance cost, rather than the full price stated as part of this action plan.

4.3.7 There is not unlimited funding to invest in sports facilities, for any of the identified partners. As a result, actions have been prioritised on sites that are currently either not fit-for-purpose,

showing a deficit of provision, or those that represent a viable investment opportunity that will significantly increase the quality, quantity or accessibility of sports provision in West Berkshire.

- 4.3.8 To provide the Council and Steering Group with a clear identification of 'strategic' investment priorities across the study area, high profile strategic investment projects have been identified overleaf in bold. These projects are likely to be limited in number due to their size but will deliver a significant level of benefit for grass-roots sport and physical activity. These projects are likely to cost approximately £250,000 or more and will include a number of different stakeholders and funding partners.

4.4 Priority List and Sport Specific Site Action Plan

- 4.4.1 The initial action plan addresses the top 10 priorities (Table 4.1) and sites within West Berkshire that are a high priority across all sports. Sport specific action plans then follow for other sites per sport (Table 4.2 to 4.4). Please note, to avoid duplication the top 10 site priorities are not replicated in the sport specific action plan section.
- 4.4.2 It is important for West Berkshire, Sports England and each NGB to have a specific list of sites that are a priority within the study area due a combination of various factors. These sites have been highlighted and agreed upon by the steering group to focus developer contributions on as they serve the need of the community and population. These sites have been ranked on a 1-10 scale where development should be focused on.
- 4.4.3 This high priority list will allow the local authority to focus their development funds in specific sites without wasting resources on further information gathering into sites. These development funds can include developer contributions, SIL or Section 106 funding and focused upon these sites. These sites have been selected due to the needs of the local population and communities through detailed analysis performed in previous needs assessments and in communication with the steering group.
- 4.4.4 When the local authority has plans to develop sites and invest money this list should be used as the main reference point.
- 4.4.5 Once the high priority list has been attained with investments then the sport specific lists should be used as a reference point for future investment as these are also ranked.

Table 4.1: Top 10 Priority list within West Berkshire

Priority Number	Site	Sub Area	Current Users of the Site:	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Resources/ Estimated Cost	Benefit to Local Area	Sports Associated
1	Faraday Road Stadium	Newbury and Thatcham	Newbury FC and AFC Newbury boys & girls	Future development being planned on site due to growth of the area, which if successful, would result in the loss of one adult pitch of good quality in the Step 5 FA grading scheme.	See note below for details ³	Cost dependant on scopes of work and complexity	Maintains adult provision within the area to the same	Football

³ NOTE:

'In line with the findings of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), which has identified that there is an over provision of adult sized football pitches (total supply of sites with community use availability not including educational sites is 47 pitches with total demand at 40, although it is noted that the total deficit is 27.5) the Council believes that both Sport England's planning policy exceptions E1 and E4 apply to varying degrees.

On reviewing the key elements of Sport England's planning policy the Council believes that exception E1 which considers the excess of playing field provision in the catchment applies in part and that it has a suitable proposal to move forward in relation to local football.

The information being relied upon in this instance, noting the assessment criteria of policy exception E1, has been collated in the last 2 years and has followed the methodology set out by Sport England. This position has also been carefully considered in relation to the strategic direction of the Council's operations and meets publicly stated aims to enhance leisure facilities over the course of the next 4 years (published and approved Council Strategy). The Council is committed to finding additional capacity across its estate for new pitches in the Newbury and Thatcham catchment.

The proposal includes:

1. Relocation of the single adult sized grass pitch at Faraday Road, together with changing accommodation and the other necessary league requirements to create a step 6 facility on a site which will be no more than 20 minutes' drive time away, and upgrade the current grass pitch to a 3G pitch with the ability to develop it to a step 5 facility. This site will be available before any construction work starts at Faraday road.
2. Bringing back into community use a former grass pitch within the Newbury catchment area for general football provision.

This proposed site will be in full Council ownership and can be seen as a reliable option for sustainable development and realistic delivery based on the characteristics identified in the strategy i.e.

- Be available for significant use by local community clubs – yes wholly Council owned.
- Have good access and ancillary facilities to service the pitch – Newbury or Thatcham catchment location, with parking, and near to other

leisure facilities.

- Be financially sustainable – yes wholly Council owned, adjacent to other sports clubs and leisure facilities.
- Be able to be maximised for training and match play provision during peak times – yes, scheduling in control of the Council.
- Be well positioned to deliver wider football development programmes, including coach education and a recreational football offer, using spare off-peak capacity to deliver this - yes, scheduling in control of the Council.
- Be able to explore shared projects – neighbouring clubs and other associated sports clubs who operate in or around the Newbury and Thatcham catchment will be approached.

This approach also helps to address the PPS's acknowledged significant deficit in 3G pitches available to the community.

The Council also believes that Sport England Policy Exception E4 applies in part, namely;

'The playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development'.

As required by this exemption, the Council can demonstrate the following to Sport England for consideration:

3. A new grass pitch will be added to the Council's estate by reconfiguring existing land;
4. The proposed replacement improves a single grass playing pitch to a 3G pitch;
5. The site will have the ability to host competitive play and training to at least the same level as required now i.e. Step 6 with the potential to move to Step 5;
6. The site will be in the Newbury or Thatcham catchment, no more than 20 minutes' drive time away from Faraday road;
7. It will be a Council owned site, and as such it can be maintained to the same level as was previously achieved;
8. As a Council site, a tenant club will be given the opportunity to possess an agreement for the use of the Ground that is acceptable to The Football Association following consultation with the relevant Competition.
9. As a Council site, within the Newbury or Thatcham catchment, it will be close to existing Council facilities and suitable for existing and potential users; and
10. Whilst the replacement provision is not available prior to the commencement of the development, the Council have undertaken to ensure that continuity of the existing users is protected and the provision of temporary facilities at Henwick playing fields has been assured until

Priority Number	Site	Sub Area	Current Users of the Site:	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Resources/ Estimated Cost	Benefit to Local Area	Sports Associated
						of site identified	standard for the local clubs which use the facility.	
2	Henwick Worthy Sports Ground	Newbury and Thatcham	Thatcham Town Harriers FC, Cold Ash FC, West Berkshire Warriors FC, Greenham Park FC, Thatcham and Newbury Town Ladies FC, Newbury and Thatcham HC, Thatcham RFC, Thatcham Town CC	Unsecured tenure on site with the hockey club and also the site is currently at capacity with continued growth from rugby and hockey to occur. No training hours available on the current AGP on site. As well as the Hockey AGP coming to the end of the lifespan. Rugby club on site currently have 20 years left on the lease. Cricket is also played on site and is at capacity.	A Masterplan would be required for the site due to the complex nature of the interacting sports which use the facility. This should incorporate a long-term community use tenure agreement and not be at the detriment of any one sport. NGB's should work in conjunction to future proof the use of site.	Cost dependant on scopes of work and complexity of the masterplan and agreements	This will secure and future proof the site over the lifespan of the strategy.	Football, Rugby Union and Hockey
3	John O'Gaunt School	West Rural	Various local football teams who use the site as their main training hub due to flood lit AGP, main clubs that use the site for training is Hungerford Town Juniors.	The surface of the AGP is coming to the end of the lifespan and is of poor quality with surface damage currently no formal demand on site due to the quality of the surface.	Resurfacing of AGP to 3G to allow greater football training demand which will address the lack of 3G AGP provision within the study area. This site could be potential for WR22 compliant depending on funding requirements and	Resurfacing of the AGP facility: £380K	Allow for a 3G AGP pitch to be located in the western portion of the study area for local	Football and Rugby

the proposed site is ready. This site has been evaluated for booking availability and all evidence suggests it is within acceptable capacity limits. Careful monitoring of this has been put in place to ensure positive relationships between users.

The Council believe that this proposal, in relation to the replacement of the Faraday road pitch and additional grass pitch in Newbury catchment and the existing Henwick transition arrangements, ensures we are meeting the requirements of national and local planning policy frameworks and Sport England policies.

For clarification, the Council has sought to make interim arrangements for the Faraday Road site by applying for planning permission to alter the layout of the pitch to enable community use until such time as a wider development in the surrounding area is resolved. Planning permission 19/00814/FUL is not being sought as a project to replace the 1 full size grass pitch in relation to the Council's obligations under the legislative and policy frameworks mentioned above, it is a community project and has its own funding arrangements.

Priority Number	Site	Sub Area	Current Users of the Site:	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Resources/ Estimated Cost	Benefit to Local Area	Sports Associated
					allocations due to proximity of local rugby clubs.		teams and school use with a long-term community use agreement potentially for both football and rugby	
4	Parkhouse School and Sports College	Newbury and Thatcham	Local football clubs use the site as their main training base as well as heavy school use. New England, Frilsham & Yattendon FC.	Current only community accessible 3G AGP in the study is nearing the end of its lifespan and it is at capacity	Support the school in the planning process of resurfacing the current AGP surface to upgrade it to the FA pitch register standards for competitive football. Could potentially be WR22 compliant rugby pitch with resurfacing dependant on allocations and funding requirements.	Costs dependant on scope of works.	Increased training provision for football and potentially rugby for numerous clubs within the area and school use	Football
5	Bradfield College Sports Complex & Tennis Club	East	School use and Scarlett Runners HC who play league adult fixtures on Sunday's	No community use and secured tenure agreement between the school and hockey clubs even though there is spare capacity on site due to the quality and provision of Sand based AGP's.	Secure long-term use agreements with local Hockey clubs, especially Newbury & Thatcham HC to allow the club to continue to grow.	Negligible depending on time to draft up community use agreements	Create a base for local hockey clubs with school links over the lifespan of the strategy and allow for further growth.	Hockey

Priority Number	Site	Sub Area	Current Users of the Site:	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Resources/ Estimated Cost	Benefit to Local Area	Sports Associated
6	Denefield School	East	No current formal community use on site	Academy school with aspirations for their own full size AGP for use by the school and also the community. Lack of AGP provision in the current area.	Formulate a new long term community use agreement and support the school in the construction of a new 3G AGP for use by local football clubs.	Costs dependant on scope of work	Increase AGP provision within the area for local clubs.	Football
7	The Triangle Field	West Rural	Local football clubs and Hungerford RFC (main user)	20 years left on lease with community use for rugby club and unsecured for local football club. The rugby pitches are over capacity due to match and training demand with poor drainage and maintenance.	Work with the town council, local authority and RFU to supply further floodlights to ease training provisions on site which will increase the carrying capacity on site. Also perform more rigorous maintenance procedures to improve pitch quality.	Negligible depending on work performed.	Increase the carrying capacity on site and further training provision with the club currently over capacity.	Rugby
8	Brimpton Recreation Ground – Take off and replace	Newbury and Thatcham	Brimpton Rangers and Parklife Rovers	Lack of available youth and mini pitches on site as the result of the local clubs increasing in numbers. No long-term community use agreement which restricts funding and grant applications	Construct a long-term community agreement to allow security of tenure to further grant applications by the clubs. Reconfigure one adult pitch to youth 11v11 to reduce deficit in this sub area for this age group	Negligible– Council maintain ace team to change pitch type and procurement of goals posts and council time to construct security of tenure agreement.	Increases the capacity for youth football within the area and allows the clubs to have secured tenure for future growth and grants for improvement to ancillary facilities.	Football

Priority Number	Site	Sub Area	Current Users of the Site:	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Resources/ Estimated Cost	Benefit to Local Area	Sports Associated
9	Englefield Road Recreation Ground	East	Theale and Tilehurst CC and local schools	Both the ancillary provision and ground quality score are listed as poor which results in a poor carrying capacity. This particular sub area also suffers from a deficit of provision due to poor pitches	Support the club in its ambition to match fund ancillary renovations and increased pitch maintenance. Secured community use is already part of the site. Encourage members to take part in potential course maintenance programs by working with parish/town councils as well as significant investment into the ancillary facilities.	Costs dependant on scope of works.	Increases capacity of cricket provision within the sub area and allows greater local school use.	Cricket
10	Goosecroft Recreation Ground	East	Purley on Thames CC and local school use	Poor cricket pitch assessment which results in a lower carrying capacity and an overall deficit in the sub area.	Support the club in a greater maintenance regime and grant funding on equipment by working with parish/town councils with maintenance programs and cost share equipment sheds.	Cost dependant on scope of works	Increases the carrying capacity of the site and reduces overall deficit of cricket within the study area. Also allows local school use of the site	Cricket

Table 4.2: West Berkshire's PPS Action Plan (2018-2036) : Football

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
Little Heath School Playing Fields	East	Enhancement	Site is currently at over capacity with the quality of the pitches so better pitch maintenance is needed as well as community agreement with Barton Rovers to build an ancillary facility.	Create a club agreement with Barton Rovers to develop a football community hub and ancillary facility as	WBDC, FF, FF and School	Costs dependant on scope of work	Short	High

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
				well as better pitch maintenance				
Gladstone Memorial Recreation Ground	West rural	Enhancement	No community use agreements with local clubs which restricts funding applications for improvement of ancillary facilities, currently used by Kintbury Rangers FC	Formulate a new community use agreement over the lifespan of the PPS strategy	WBDC and Gladstone Memorial Trust	Negligible - Time of officer to draft agreement	Short	High
Denefield School (Trust)	East	Enhancement and Provision	No formal community use agreement between the clubs and school as well as no access to changing rooms provision. Managed by an Academy trust.	Construct a formal community use agreement with Westwood Wanderers and the school and feasibility work into construction of a 3G AGP to serve local clubs.	WBDC, FA and FF and Academy Trust	To be defined by further feasibility work and scope of project	Short	High
Bucklebury Village Recreation Ground	East Rural	Enhancement	No long-term security use agreement between the local authority and the clubs which use the site (Bucklebury Wolves and Cougars FC and managed by Bucklebury Parish Council)	Construct a formal community use agreement over the lifespan of the strategy	WBDC and Local football clubs	Negligible – Local authority officer time	Short	High
Brookfields Specialist Senior School	East	Enhancement	Poor quality surface of pitch and no long-term security use agreement between the school and Barton Rovers FC.	Construct a formal community use agreement with local football clubs and improve pitch maintenance	Brookfields School and Football Clubs	N/A	Short	Medium
Aldermaston Recreational Society	East Rural	Enhancement	Lack of suitable areas for fans and floodlit availability within the ground for training demand.	Support the club in the planning process of a new 50-seater stand and also the construction of new floodlights to help with training demand	WBDC	Negligible - Time from local authority officer during planning process	Medium	Medium

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
Bucknell's Meadow	East	Provision	Currently no formal community use on site due to football club folding 3 years ago with poor pitch quality and poor ancillary facilities.	Re designation of site due to no formal use for a number of years to open space or alternative sports or physical activity. This will free up more resources to be focused on other sites.	WBDC	Negligible – Planning officer time	Medium	Medium
Cold Ash Recreation Ground	Newbury and Thatcham	Enhancement	Anti social behaviour on site with no formal community use agreements with the clubs as well as drainage problems. Currently used by Cold Ash Boys & Girls FC and Cougars FC.	Secure a community use agreement over the lifespan of the strategy as well as installation of dog bins and additional signage. Support the clubs in further pitch maintenance to increase carrying capacity. Work with club and FA to improve pitches on site	Parish council and FF	Costs dependant on the scope of works for installation of dog bins and signs etc. Local officer time to construct community use agreement.	Medium	Medium
Englefield Road Recreation Ground	East	Enhancement	Lack of pitch space on site and poor ancillary facilities (site belongs to Parish Council)	Reconfigure pitches of site to use all available space and create a new adult pitch to ease demand.	Parish Council and FA	Costs dependant on new pitch markings and goal posts	Medium	Medium
Down lands School /Compton Rec Ground	East	Provision	No current users on site due to lack of provision and AGP agreements.	Interest has been expressed in a new AGP in conjunction with the school. This must have a community use	WBDC/FA/FF	Costs dependant on scope of work	Medium	Low
Pangbourne College	East	Provision	Lack of community available AGP's within the study area and current AGP on site is ending its lifespan.	Support the school in the construction of a new 3G AGP and resurfacing of current AGP if they allow a community use	WBDC	Planning officer time	Long	Medium

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
				agreement with local clubs				
Parkhouse School and Sports College	Newbury and Thatcham	Provision	Current only community accessible 3G AGP in the study is nearing the end of its lifespan and it is at capacity	Support the school in the planning process of resurfacing the current AGP surface to upgrade it to the FA pitch register standards for competitive football	WBDC	Planning officer time	Long	Medium
Calcot Recreation Ground	East	Enhancement	No formal community use agreement or security of tenure with the parish council or football club which use the site as well as poor pitch quality as well as anti-social behaviour.	Construct a new community use agreement and improve security on site to decrease anti-social behaviour. Once tenure secured pitch improvements for the site should be investigated.	WBDC and FF	Costs depending on scope of works (CCTV camera installation or gates etc)	Long	Low

Table 4.3: West Berkshire's PPS Action Plan (2018-2036): Rugby Union

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
Newbury Rugby Football Club	Newbury and Thatcham	Enhancement and Provision	Current site is at over capacity across all age groups due to school use also at the site. Over capacity is affecting the quality of pitches.	Relocation and reconfiguration of pitches and also support the club in a land swap with a local developer to further increase provision. Investment should also focus on open grass	WBDC and RFU	Costs dependant on scope of works in relation to conversion of grass land to playing pitches.	Medium	High

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
				space to convert to mini pitches to ease demand.		Planning officer time to support land development scheme.		
Tadley Rugby Club	East Rural	Enhancement and provision	Current site is over capacity for match day and training demand due to growth of the club. The current lifespan of the ancillary facility is ending its lifespan paired with the current growth of the club.	Support the club in the planning process for a addition to the clubhouse and ancillary facilities as well as new floodlights to ease training demand. Also invest in car park improvements.	WBDC and RFU	Support from planning officers at the local authority and costs dependant on scope of floodlight and ancillary options	Long	High
Aldermaston Recreational Society	East Rural	Enhancement	Drainage issues and lack of floodlit provision for training demand (Add notes to the lease with the MoD site)	Support the club in new construction of floodlights to improve training demand	WBDC	Negligible – Planning officer time	Medium	Medium
Park House School and Sports College	Newbury and Thatcham	Enhancement	Poor quality surface of current 3G AGP which has community use.	Support the school in a construction of a new 3G WR22 AGP which allows community use for local clubs based upon developer contributions.	WBDC and RFU	Costs dependant on scope of works	Long	Low
St Bartholomew's School Enborne Road Pitches	Newbury and Thatcham	Enhancement	Training from local clubs are located at the school's pitches which are showing a poor-quality rating due to current use and maintenance procedures.	Further investment in pitch maintenance on the pitches that are used by local clubs as well as staff increases to upkeep with regular work	WBDC and RFU	Cost dependant on scope of works	Long	Low

Table 4.4: West Berkshire's PPS Action Plan (2018-2036): Cricket

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
Jacks Booth Ground	East	Enhancement and Provision	The current site is over capacity with a poor-quality pitch which currently hosts 9 teams and the ancillary facility is ending its lifespan due to being over 25 years old and cannot cope with the current demand.	Support the club in pitch improvements and also to establish use age at Englefield Cricket Club due to the site only having team currently using the site, but this site also has to be improved. Also support the club in funding and planning permissions for any ancillary additions.	WBDC and ECB	Little cost in the combined usage of Englefield Cricket club Costs dependent on the amount of work performed to upgrade the poor-quality pitch	Medium	High
Northcroft Recreation Ground	Newbury and Thatcham	Provision	Current home to Newbury CC, poor ancillary facilities and evidence of anti-social behaviour on the site	Support the club in the planning process and applications for a new ancillary facility having already pledged £150,000 from various grants and trusts.	WBDC	Negligible – Help with planning proves	Medium	High
Englefield Cricket Club	East	Enhancement	Grass wickets were identified as poor resulting in no carrying capacity at the site	Increased and improve pitch maintenance in order to increase carrying capacity and reduce grass wicket deficit of the east sub area	EBC and ECB	Cost dependent on scope of work	Medium	Medium
Goosecroft Recreation Ground	East	Provision	Poor quality pitch resulting in a low carrying capacity on site which is currently home to Purley on Thames CC	Improve pitch maintenance and pitch regime in order to improve carrying capacity and reduce pitch deficit within the sub area Work with Parish council for pitch improvements as they manage the site.	WBDC and ECB	Cost dependant on scope of work	Medium	Medium

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
Hampstead Norreys Village Hall	East Rural	Enhancement	Poor quality pitch resulting in a low carrying capacity on site which is currently home to Hampstead Norey's CC. Managed and owned by local parish council.	Improve pitch maintenance and pitch regime in order to improve carrying capacity and reduce pitch deficit within the sub area. Work with parish council to improve pitch maintenance programs and education courses.	WBDC and ECB	Cost dependant on scope of work	Medium	Medium
West Isley Cricket Club	East Rural	Enhancement	The site is currently at over capacity for grass provision due to the poor-quality pitch on site, there is also insufficient practice nets on site for the demand	Support the club in improvements for maintenance and also the renovation of practice nets	WBDC and ECB	Costs depending on scope of work	Medium	Medium
Yattendon & Frilsham Cricket Club	East Rural	Enhancement	Concern form the club that the site will be converted to agricultural land due to lack of community use agreement along with a poor-quality pitch with no carrying capacity	Support the club in terms of agreeing a suitable long erm community use agreement on the current site between club and landowners	WBDC and current landowners	Negligible – Time from officer to work on lease	Medium	Medium
Aldworth Recreation Ground	East Rural	Enhancement	Poor quality score of grass pitches which results in a 0 carrying capacity which results in no formal community use presently on site.	Support the site to improve the pitch maintenance and establish funding for improved quality score	ECB	Cost dependant on scale of work	Medium	Low

Table 4.5: West Berkshire's PPS Action Plan (2018-2036): Hockey

Site	Sub Area	Action ID/Ref	Issue / opportunity	Key Action(s)	Partners	Resources/ Costs	Timing	Priority
Pangbourne College	East	Enhancement	Sand based AGP is coming to the end of the lifespan and needs resurfacing in order to cope with school demand.	Support the school in the planning process of the resurfacing of the AGP but allow a community use agreement to be incorporated for external use.	WBDC and EH	Negligible – Planning officer time	Medium	Medium
St Bartholomew's School	Newbury and Thatcham	Enhancement	No community use at the site currently due to previous issues with vandalism and damages.	Agree with the school a community use agreement based upon damages and outlines responsibilities of clubs who use the site to create a community link	EH	N/A	Medium	Medium
Trinity Academy Campus	Newbury and Thatcham	Enhancement	Lack of floodlit provision to cope with the demands of junior hockey provision which is in conjunction with the school and Newbury and Thatcham HC.	Support the school in improvements of floodlights in order to increase training demand and create a formal long-term community use agreement	Education and Clubs	Costs dependant on scope of work	Medium	Medium

Section 5: Delivering the Playing Pitch Strategy



5 Delivering the Playing Pitch Strategy

- 5.1.1 To facilitate the development of sport and physical activity across West Berkshire, it is advised that the Steering Group, set up as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy project, continues to work together to deliver the recommendations defined as part of this strategy.
- 5.1.2 The success of a PPS will be determined by how it is used. It is recommended that the delivery of the strategy is led by the Council, with close support by the steering group that has been developed as part of this project. Further guidance is provided in Sport England’s PPS Guidance in the form of the Stage E commentary and associated checklist. Further detail on how a PPS can be used is included in Technical Appendix G – Applying the Playing Pitch Strategy.

5.2 Keeping the PPS relevant and up-to-date

- 5.2.1 To ensure that the Playing Pitch Strategy stays relevant and continues to support stakeholders in the delivery of sport and physical activity facility investment and development, an annual review should be undertaken. This review, which if undertaken regularly will have a reduced scope than the full PPS, will allow the steering group to review progress against the PPS recommendations and action plan. The review will also identify any emerging issues and apply any lessons learnt through recent development or investment projects.
- 5.2.2 Through the development of the PPS, data has been stored and analysed on the 4 global Playing Pitch Strategy Platform, which has up to date supply and demand data for pitch sports across the District. This data is available to West Berkshire and it is recommended that this is used as the starting point for future strategy refresh projects.

Figure 5.1: West Berkshire District Council Playing Pitch Platform

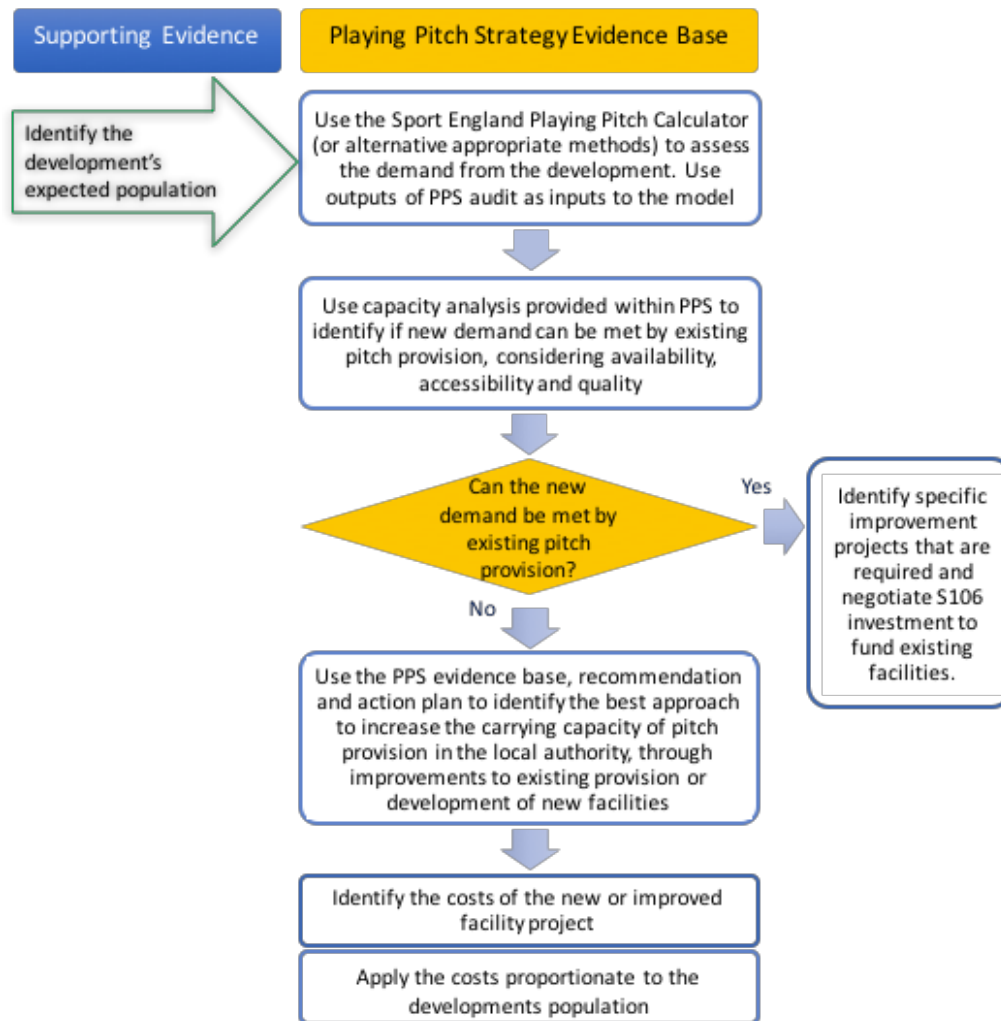
Site Name	Site Address	Site Assessor Name	Scheduled At	Completed At	Responded	Confirmed	Time to visit	Actions
BELLINGHAM LEISURE & LIFESTYLE CENTRE	Talbot Place, London, SE2 0TZ	Brooke Butler	2018-01-29 08:40:00	2018-11-23	X No	X No	X Data passed	Go Edit
DOWNHAM HEALTH & LEISURE CENTRE	Glenhope Road, Epsomley, EPI 4RL	Sam James	2018-01-29 12:23:00	2018-11-23	X No	X No	X Data passed	Go Edit
ST DUNSTONS COLLEGE SPORTS CENTRE	Canadian Avenue, London, SE6 4BW	Brooke Butler	2018-06-19 11:23:00	2018-11-08	X No	X No	X Data passed	Go Edit
THE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CENTRE (NEBOTSHALL ROAD)	Whitehall Lane, Bramley, BT1 2SD	Brooke Butler	2018-06-16 10:30:00	2018-09-25	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	X Data passed	Go Edit
TEN EM BEE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE	Kingsley Bridge Road, London, SE26 5HQ	Sam James	2018-01-20 12:00:00	2018-09-25	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	X Data passed	Go Edit
ODDIFORD GREEN SCHOOL	Evenlyn Street, London, SE28 5RN	Sam James	2018-01-25 10:30:00	2018-09-19	X No	X No	X Data passed	Go Edit
THE BRIDGE LEISURE CENTRE	Abbeyhall Road, London, SE8 1SD	Sam James	2018-01-26 11:25:00	2018-07-24	X No	X No	X Data passed	Go Edit
CATFORD WANDERERS SPORTS CLUB	Ambleside Road, London, SE12 9TN	Sam James	2018-01-26 13:00:00	2018-07-24	X No	X No	X Data passed	Go Edit
Perrymount Primary School	BT1 5LL	Brooke Butler	2018-01-26 20:00:00	2018-07-12	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	X Data passed	Go Edit
Warren Avenue Playing Fields	97 Goslemery Rd, Bramley EPI 1DQ	Brooke Butler	2018-06-19 13:00:00	2018-07-12	✔ Yes	✔ Yes	X Data passed	Go Edit

- 5.2.3 In the short term, it is advised that the Council sets up an implementation group (which should be a continuation of steering group set up as part of the PPS), to co-ordinate preparation of a short-term action plan, as well as undertaking further sub-regional needs assessment for major cross-boundary development projects. The PPS has identified, on a site by site and sub-area level, the needs for pitch and ancillary provision across West Berkshire. Where the current level of supply does not meet the current or future needs of residents for specific sports, pitch typologies and ancillaries have been identified as requiring further capacity to meet demand.
- 5.2.4 In order to provide this additional capacity, guidance has been provided as to whether the steering group and partner organisations should look to;
- 79. Enhance existing pitches to increase their capacity and ensure adequate maintenance to maintain the higher use, and/or
 - 80. Secure greater community access to sites and undertake necessary works to allow for such use to occur, and/or
 - 81. Provide new playing pitches on new sites (natural or artificial grass pitches).
- 5.2.5 Where the third option has been recommended, further guidance is available from Sport England and National Governing Bodies to advise on the best course of action for local authorities and delivery organisations.

5.3 Securing additional or improved pitch provision through development

- 5.3.1 In addition to the specific site by site recommendations identified throughout needs assessment, it is also key that the strategy provides a clear approach to securing playing pitch provision in the case new development, or utilising planning gain and Section 106 (S106) contributions to improve the quantity or accessibility of existing provision.
- 5.3.2 It is important to note that for any contribution secured through S106, a clear and tailored approach is required, to demonstrate how the contribution will be used to benefit residents. Specifically, the Playing Pitch Strategy's evidence base and action plan should be used to justify the need arising from the specific development and how these are to be met.
- 5.3.3 The graphic overleaf and associated commentary identifies the stages that should be followed, when utilising the Playing Pitch Strategy to secure additional or improved pitch provision through development.

Figure 5.2: Securing additional or improved pitch provision through development



5.3.4 Although the population of a single development may not in itself generate the demand for a full pitch, it will still generate additional demand which should be quantified and be met. An example of how the Playing Pitch New Development CaWBDCulator can be used to caWBDCulate the need for new pitch provision arising from new development is included within the scenario testing section of this strategy,

5.4 Securing additional or improved pitch provision through development

5.4.1 In addition to the new or improved pitch provision that is identified in line with the process demonstrated above, the cost for maintenance of new facilities should also be sought for both on-site and off-site provision. For example, where 3G facilities are installed, the carpet will require replacement (approximately every 10 years depending on level of usage and maintenance) and costs towards a sinking fund should also be sought.

5.4.2 Where a pitch or pitches are required on-site, this may include requiring delivery through a planning policy and a masterplan approach for the whole area. This can ensure that enough suitable land is planned from the outset and provided at no cost. This is particularly important where there is a need for a large land-take associated with pitches.

- 5.4.3 Planning policy should seek to ensure that where sites are developed in phases or through multiple applications, and where the pitch provision is required on-site, that this provision is coordinated and delivered by the landowners/developers. In some circumstances, a single site for pitches serving all the development or all its phases can be required.
- 5.4.4 The timing and delivery of the pitches and related changing and parking facilities should be considered in relation to development phasing to achieve a balance between ensuring provision is in place in time to meet the needs of the residents, avoiding pressure being placed on existing facilities, and the financial viability of the development.
- 5.4.5 Where there are separate developments in close proximity that taken together generate a need for a whole pitch, contributions need to be made towards new provision or improving, existing pitches. For new pitches, the planning policy therefore also needs to identify where that pitch and related changing and parking facilities are to be located, how sufficient land is to be secured, and (where known) the individual developments that need to contribute to it. This also applies to where there is a need for a larger strategic site serving a large catchment. This may require the developers to provide the land on-site or for the local planning authority to identify the land through the Local Plan process.

5.5 Securing appropriate land provision from new development

- 5.5.1 Suitable land needs to be provided by developments, in line with the guidelines below;
82. Where the investment need is for a new pitch and related changing and parking facilities to meet the demand directly generated by the population of the new development(s), then the developer is expected to meet all these costs. These include provision, maintenance and land costs.
83. Where the demand is for the majority (50% or more) of a pitch and related changing and parking facilities, that is to be provided on site, suitable land will be provided by the developer at no cost, as well as the population-related proportion of the cost of the pitch.
84. Where the demand is for less than 50% of a pitch and related changing and parking facilities, that is to be provided on-site, then suitable land needs to be planned into the development, however only a proportionate amount of this land will be provided for free and the remainder will need to be funded from other sources (e.g. from pooled contributions from other developments, from grants or other sources).
85. Where the land cannot be provided for on-site because of proven master-planning constraints, financial viability or other relevant reasons, then the local authority may negotiate an appropriate alternative contribution, where this is S106 compliant.

5.6 Identifying the appropriate provision for contribution

- 5.6.1 As identified in the policy context for this document, the Council will secure developer contributions where appropriate towards future sports infrastructure to support future

development in accordance with Local Plan policies and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Developer contributions will primarily be sought through S106 agreements, but other funding sources may also be secured where possible. The Council will continue to work with partners and infrastructure providers in order to secure improvements to sport infrastructure to meet the future needs of the District.

5.6.2 In the case of S106 contributions, the following should be noted;

86. No more than five contributions may be pooled towards the provision of any single infrastructure project or type of infrastructure.
87. Section 106 contributions must be directly related to the development in question, however the impact of any development can affect the wider community. This means that S106 contributions can be used to deliver improvements to facilities that are located some distance away from the development, such as a local town centre or major sports facility hub site.
88. Development that is funded through S106 contribution should be focussed on specific projects, identified through the strategic need's assessments (such as this Playing Pitch Strategy) that have been issued by the Council.

5.7 Calculating contributions

5.7.1 To calculate the scale of a developer's financial contributions for the provision of pitches and related facilities, the following should be used;

89. Sport England's Playing Pitch New Development Calculator (PPNCD) should be used to assess pitch and related facilities arising from specific developments. This can be supported and evidenced by Sport England's latest facility costs for pitches and related facilities, as well as detailed feasibility work and support from qualified cost consultants.
90. The cost of maintenance and sinking funds, where justified, should be calculated using Sport England or NGB advice and supporting documents, however local knowledge and previous costs from similar maintenance contracts should be considered. Maintenance and sinking costs can also be provided by Sport England's 'Lifecycle Costs' (2017) however where specific and robust knowledge is available it is recommended that this is used.
91. Where a land cost is justified this cost will be based on the local market cost for the relevant sport/leisure land use. There may also be a need to add the cost of other local and site-specific costs (e.g. abnormal ground conditions, site access needs etc.).
92. All costs should date related and inflation needs to be considered (e.g. if a facility is to be delivered in 3 years' time the planning condition must apply an appropriate inflation

index).

- 5.7.2 If the PPNCD is to be used, the Council should ensure that the most recent template is used, as financial data changes regularly. Further support is available from Sport England as required.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SPORT



4global Consulting

Building 3, Chiswick Business Park

566 Chiswick High Road

London, W4 5YA

Scrutiny Commission – 28 November 2023

Item 11 – Thames Water Update

Verbal Item

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WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN 1 AUGUST 2023 - 30 NOVEMBER 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 eight Executive Members with the following portfolios:

Executive Leader of the Council Strategy, Communications and Public Safety	Councillor Lee Dillon
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Governance and Transformation	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Finance and Corporate Services	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development	Councillor Martin Colston
Adult Social Care and Health Integration	Councillor Alan Macro
Children, Education and Young People's Services	Councillor Heather Codling
Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside	Councillor Janine Lewis
Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel	Councillor Denise Gaines
Planning and Community Engagement	Councillor Tony Vickers

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 August 2023

Nicola Thomas
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)
31 Aug 2023	Outside Bodies Appointments	To make amendments and further appointments to Outside Bodies	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Leader of Council, Strategy, Communications and Public Safety			David Cook	Open
21 Sep 2023	Establishment of Community Forums	To provide a range of options to establish Community Forums	Yes	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open
21 Sep 2023	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2023/24	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	No	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open
21 Sep 2023	Amendments to Public Protection Partnership's Inter Authority Agreement	To amend the IAA to reflect the changes to the constitution in respect of the Joint Public Protection Committee	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)
		approved by Council on 20 July 2023						
21 Sep 2023	Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group Report	OSMC final report	No	Executive			Gordon Oliver	Open
21 Sep 2023	Consultation summary for the development of a sports pitch at Manor Park, and proposal as to how to progress	To inform Members of the findings from the consultation exercise with regard to the development of a sports pitch at Manor Park and whether to progress with a planning application.	Yes	Executive			Paul Martindill	Open
21 Sep 2023	Corporate Transformation Programme 2023-25	To outline the projects to be included in the Council's corporate Transformation Programme	No	Executive			Gabrielle Mancini	Open
21 Sep 2023	Customer	Scrutiny	No	Executive			Gordon Oliver	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)
	Journey Task and Finish Group Report	Commission task and finish group's final report.						
21 Sep 2023	Capital Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2023/24	To present the Q1 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
5 Oct 2023	Appointment to an Outside Body (Berkshire Maestros)		Yes	Portfolio Holder: Leader of Council, Strategy, Communications and Public Safety			David Cook	Open
20 Oct 2023	Winter Service Plan 2023/24	To approve the Winter Service Plan 2023/24	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel	Consultation with Town/Parish Councils, Ward Members and consideration of the comments received, including from members of the public during		Andrew Reynolds	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 previous winter service season.			
2 Nov 2023	Updated Procurement Strategy	To seek approval for the updated strategy.	Yes	Executive			Kate Pearson	Open
2 Nov 2023	Response to the "20 is Plenty" Motion	To respond to a Motion to Council raised by Councillor Abbs at its meeting on 16th March 2023 in respect of 20mph speed limits.	Yes	Executive	Discussion at TAG in July 2023.		Neil Stacey	Open
2 Nov 2023	Property Investment Strategy		Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
2 Nov 2023	Corporate Complaints Review	To approve a new Corporate Complaints policy	Yes	Executive			Leigh Hogan	Open
2 Nov 2023	Review of the Newbury Sports Hub development	To review the Executive Committee decision taken	Yes	Executive			Paul Martindill	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)
		on March 23 2023, titled 'Newbury Sports Hub – revised costs and seeking permission to sign the Development Management Agreement'.						
2 Nov 2023	Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report	To inform the Executive of the progress in delivering the Environment Strategy for the period July 2022 - July 2023	No	Executive	The following groups / people will have been consulted / briefed on the progress report by the time it goes to Executive: Environment Advisory Group (25th September) Environment Delivery Project Board Environment Department Managers Service Lead - Climate		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)
					Change Service Director, Environment Executive Director Place Parish Climate Forum			
2 Nov 2023	Night Warden Service	The purpose of the report is to seek agreement to proceed with a staff consultation, with a view to de-commissioning the Night Warden (NW) Service as soon as possible	Yes	Executive			Maria Shepherd	Open
2 Nov 2023	Contracts for Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive Board	To provide details of forthcoming supply, service and works contract awards that will have a	Yes	Executive			Kate Pearson	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)
		contract value in excess of £2.5m and as such will require approval from the Executive during the next quarter.						
2 Nov 2023	The future of West Street House	To present potential options for the future of West Street House.	Yes	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
2 Nov 2023	Asset Management Strategy		Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
7 Nov 2023	Proposed Amendment to the Household Support Fund 2023/24	To consider an increased contribution for voluntary sector provision to deliver the core objectives of the Household Support Fund.	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Leader of Council, Strategy, Communications and Public Safety			Sean Murphy	Open
23 Nov 2023	Medium Term Financial Planning	To provide Executive with an overview of	Yes	Executive			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)
		the financial planning position for 2023-24 and beyond						
30 Nov 2023	West Berkshire SEND Strategy	The publication of the West Berks SEND Strategy.	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Children, Education and Young People's Services			Jack Caine	Open
12 Dec 2023	Update to Household Support Fund allocations		Yes	Portfolio Holder: Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel			Sean Murphy	Open
14 Dec 2023	Windmill Court and Stafford House-restrictive covenants	To enable a decision on whether to lift the restrictions and restrictive covenants on the titles of property to permit redevelopment of the site by	Yes	Executive			Martin Syrett	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority

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)
		Sovereign Housing Association.						holding that information)
14 Dec 2023	Awareness Days programme	To set out the programme of awareness days, weeks or months to be included on the communications plan for the year ahead.	Yes	Executive			Martin Dunscombe	Open
14 Dec 2023	2023/24 Performance Report Quarter Two	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.	Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
14 Dec 2023	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework	The purpose of the report is to propose a new EDI Framework for West	Yes	Executive			Pamela Voss	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)
		Berkshire Council.						
14 Dec 2023	Capital Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2023/24	To present the Q2 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
14 Dec 2023	Care Homes	The paper relates to the Care Market Strategy.	Yes	Executive			Richard Pask	Open
14 Dec 2023	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2023/24	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open
14 Dec 2023	Response to Rwanda motion	Report response to Rwanda motion	Yes	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
14 Dec 2023	Rural Prosperity Fund	To seek approval for the design of a	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)
	Business Grant Scheme Proposal	capital grant scheme for small rural businesses to promote economic growth, as part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund.						
14 Dec 2023	Hackney Carriage Tariffs - 2024	To consider proposals for adjustments to the tariffs and the proposed consultation process.	Yes	Executive			Moira Fraser	Open
14 Dec 2023	The Retender of the Council's Network of Contracted Local Bus Services	To ensure contract award approval from Corporate Board, Operations Board and Executive is given to the successful bidder to operate the Council's retender of our	Yes	Executive			Matthew Metcalfe	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)
		network of contracted local bus services.						
14 Dec 2023	Newbury Town Centre Pedestrianisation	To approve a trial extension of the pedestrianisation timing in Newbury Town Centre from 10am to 5pm, to 10am to 12 midnight	Yes	Executive			Jon Winstanley	Open
14 Dec 2023	Senior Management Restructure (Resources)	To approve potential redundancy payments associated within a restructure,	Yes	Executive			Joseph Holmes	Fully exempt Information relating to any individual. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. 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) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority.
26 Jan 2024	Pangbourne Bus Turning Circle	To make a decision on whether a	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Highways,			Emma Jameson	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)
	Consultation	consultation about the proposed Pangbourne Turning Circle should proceed in late January/early February 2024.		Housing and Sustainable Travel				
31 Jan 2024	Parking Review Amendment 34	Experimental parking amendment for Sterling Gardens, Newbury. To consider the responses received during statutory consultation.	No	Portfolio Holder: Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel			Alex Drysdale	Open
31 Jan 2024	Parking Review Amendment 35	Relates to various experimental EV charging bays in Newbury and Hungerford. To consider responses received during statutory	No	Portfolio Holder: Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel			Alex Drysdale	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)
		consultation.						
31 Jan 2024	Experimental Prohibition of Driving Order	Kings Road Newbury. To consider the responses received during statutory consultation.	No	Portfolio Holder: Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel			Alex Drysdale	Open
8 Feb 2024	Parking Strategy 2023-2033	To consider and approve the West Berkshire Council Parking Strategy 2023-2033.	Yes	Executive			Ian Martinez	Open
8 Feb 2024	Capital Strategy 2024-34	To inform Members of the latest capital financial performance of the Council.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
8 Feb 2024	Revenue Budget 2024-25	To inform Members of the latest revenue financial performance of the Council.	Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open
8 Feb 2024	Medium Term	To provide Executive with	Yes	Executive			Joseph	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)
	Financial Strategy	an overview of the financial planning strategy for 2023-24 and beyond					Holmes	
8 Feb 2024	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2024/25	To review the Council's management of cash-flow, borrowing and investments in the financial year 2023/24.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
8 Feb 2024	Capital Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2023/24	To present the Q3 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
8 Feb 2024	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2023/24	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-	Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	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)
		end forecast.						
14 Mar 2024	Rights of Way Improvement Plan	To present the revised plan following public consultation.	Yes	Executive			Elaine Cox	Open
14 Mar 2024	Building Control Shared Service Agreement		Yes	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
1 May 2024	School Streets Francis Baily School - Experimental Traffic Order	To consider the responses received during statutory consultation.	No	Portfolio Holder: Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel			Gareth Dowding	Open
16 May 2024	2023/24 Performance Report Quarter Three	To highlight successes and where performance has fallen below the expected level, to present information on the remedial	Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	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)
		action taken, and the impact of that action.						
16 May 2024	Waste Strategy	Information and Approval for Publication	Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
12 Sep 2024	2023/24 Performance Report Quarter Four	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.	Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
	Review of Libraries Service	To evaluate the impact of the transformation of the library service which took place in 2017-18 and put forward any additional options for	Yes	Executive	Community Needs Assessment Stakeholder Surveys – volunteers, staff, service managers, hard to reach groups Public Survey		Felicity Harrison	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)
		improving the service for residents.			including library users and non-users Parish and Town Council engagement sessions			
	Bond Riverside Regeneration Programme Review	To approve revised strategic objectives and delivery strategy for the Bond Riverside Regeneration Programme in order to take account of the change of direction for Football on Faraday Road. The report will be a revision and replacement for the London Road Industrial Estate Project Refresh report	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)
		that was approved by Executive on 9 June 2022.						
	Leisure Strategy Delivery Plan	To present the plan for implementing the Leisure Strategy.	Yes	Executive			Paul Martindill	Open
	Community Infrastructure Levy- Customer Journey Independent Review	Response to motion to Council March 2023 by Councillor Brooks	No	Executive			Bryan Lyttle	Open
	Joint Legal team (JLT) Review	To agree a revised Heads of Term Agreement and to delegate authority to the Service Lead, Legal and Democratic Services to finalise the same.	Yes	Executive			Leigh Hogan	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)
								Information which reveals that the authority proposes to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment.
	LRIE lease acquisitions	To seek Executive sign-off to make an offer to buy-back the leases	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)
		on plots 13U and 13T on the LRIE, subject to a satisfactory price being agreed at negotiations which are currently underway with the leaseholders on the sites.						
	Contract Award report for West Point House Refurbishment Project	Contract value estimated to be £990k therefore included on the Forward Plan for information	No	Joseph Holmes - Executive Director			Vickie Collins	Open
	Kennet Valley Primary School SEMH Provision	Contract award report for the Kennet Valley expansion works following a full tender process. Contract value estimated at £1.8 million	Yes	Paul Coe - Interim Executive Director			Vicky Pearce	Open

Scrutiny Commission Work Programme







The following items will be considered as standing items: Capital and Revenue Financial Performance Reports (Quarterly), and Performance Report (Annually)

Last Updated:
15 Nov 2023

Item	Scrutiny Theme	Purpose	Lead Officer	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member	Pre or post decision?
28 November 2023					
Matters arising from the Thames Water and Environment Agency Review	<i>Partnership Effectiveness</i>	To provide an update on activities since the Scrutiny Commission meeting on 11 October.	-	Chair of Scrutiny Commission	Scrutiny Commission Decision
Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Framework	<i>Policy Effectiveness</i>	To review the draft Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Framework	Sarah Clarke / Pamela Voss	Applies to all portfolios	Pre-decision
Recruitment of Foster Carers	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the recruitment, remuneration and initiatives that are both taking place and planned with foster carers in West Berkshire	AnnMarie Dodds / Dave Wraight	Children, Education and Young People	Scrutiny Commission Decision
Review of the Newbury Sports Hub Development	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To consider whether the Scrutiny Commission wishes to undertake a review of the Sports Hub Development to identify lessons that could be learned to inform future projects.	-	Chair of Scrutiny Commission	Scrutiny Commission Decision
27 February 2024					
Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2024/25	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the Council's management of cash-flow, borrowing and investments in the financial year 2023/24.	Joseph Holmes / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Finance and Corporate Services	Pre-decision
Medium Term Financial Strategy	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To provide Executive with an overview of the financial planning strategy for 2023-24 and beyond	Joseph Holmes	Finance and Corporate Services	Pre-decision
Capital Strategy 2024-34	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To inform Members of the latest capital financial performance of the Council.	Joseph Holmes / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Finance and Corporate Services	Pre-decision
Revenue Budget 2024-25	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To inform Members of the latest revenue financial performance of the Council.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	Finance and Corporate Services	Pre-decision
21 May 2024					
Environment Strategy - Operational Review	<i>Policy Effectiveness</i>	To review progress in implementing the Council's Environment Strategy Delivery Plan	Jon Winstanley / Jenny Graham	Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity	Scrutiny Commission Decision
Waste Strategy	<i>Policy Effectiveness</i>	To review the development of the Waste Strategy	Jon Winstanley / Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity	Pre-decision

	Libraries Service	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the performance of the Libraries Service and its funding model.	April Peberdy / Felicity Harrison	Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside	Scrutiny Commission Decision
	Covid and Recovery Task Group Report	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To present the Task Group's report	Gordon Oliver	Task Group Chairman	Scrutiny Commission Decision
Standing Items						
	Quarterly Capital Financial Performance Report	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	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	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	Finance and Economic Development	Pre-decision
	Performance Report (Annual)	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	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

Council Strategy Priorities

-  Services We Are Proud Of
-  A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All
-  Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency
-  A Prosperous and Resilient West Berkshire
-  Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice
-  Crime and Disorder Committee

Scrutiny Commission Draft Forward Plan Items (November 2023)

Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u> ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the topic of concern to local residents? What is the level of interest amongst particular communities / groups? Has the topic been identified by Members / officers / partners? Has there been negative press about the topic? 	3 = high public interest 2 = medium public interest 1 = low public interest
<u>A</u> rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the topic affect all parts of the district or only selected areas / communities? 	3 = entire district 2 = multiple wards 1 = single ward
<u>P</u> erformance / Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there / has there been a high level of dissatisfaction amongst service users? Is there evidence of poor performance in this service? Do we understand why performance is poor? Is the service costly to run relative to other areas? Does this relate to a priority in the Council Strategy? 	3 = poor performance / high priority 2 = fair performance / medium priority 1 = good performance / low priority
<u>E</u> ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the issue one where the committee can exert influence and add value? Are changes to policy and / or legislation planned that will affect the service? Is work already underway or planned to investigate the issue? Are changes already planned for the service? 	3 = good chance to deliver change 2 = fair chance to deliver change 1 = little chance to deliver change
<u>R</u> esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the review be delivered with existing resources and in a timely fashion? 	3 = good availability of resources 2 = some resource constraints 1 = poor resource availability

Topic:	Recruitment of Foster Carers	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is struggling to recruit foster carers leading to more residential care home placements and increased costs. 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no evidence that this is a particular concern for local residents. There have been articles in the national and local media about the shortage of foster carers. This has been identified as a priority for scrutiny by senior officers. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The low number of foster carers means that more children are being placed into care homes. Social care costs for children are very high and there has been considerable growth in the numbers being placed in care, which is putting pressure on budgets. Increasing the number of foster carers is a priority in the Council Strategy with a target to increase the number by 12% by 2027. 	3
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an area where Members can bring local knowledge to bear. This is an opportunity to learn from other areas / best practice. Potential overlaps with other scrutiny topics such as broken market for children's social care placements. 	2
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be handled as an item at a scheduled meeting. Scheduled for November 2023. 	3
TOTAL		13

Topic:	Budget Scrutiny	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to review the Executive's Budget proposals and make recommendations in respect of those proposals, particularly in the light of projected budget deficits. 	
Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles in local media. • Wider interest in local authority finances in the national media due to several councils issuing S114 notices or at risk of doing so. • Budget scrutiny flagged as important by senior officers and welcomed by Exec Members. 	3
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicted £8.7M overspend at the end of Q1, which is in excess of available reserves. • Ensuring sustainable services is a priority in the Council Strategy. • Reasons for overspend are clearly understood and measures have been put in place to manage spend. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget scrutiny is an important function of the Scrutiny Commission. • There is comprehensive advice on the CfGS website about how to undertake financial scrutiny. • Strict controls on expenditure are already in place. 	2
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered to a limited extent through the quarterly capital and revenue reports. • A special meeting is proposed in February to allow for scrutiny of the budget for 2024/25. 	3
TOTAL		13

Topic:	Parking Strategy	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced car park revenues post-Covid • Role of parking in regeneration and place-making. • The draft Parking Strategy is out to public consultation in autumn 2023 and is due to be adopted April 2024. 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking matters are of concern to many residents. • There have been several articles in the press about parking matters, including pavement parking, anti-social behaviour in car parks, and displaced parking from rail stations. • Not identified by Exec Members nor senior officers as a priority for scrutiny review. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide. 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking revenue has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels due to more people shopping online and increases in people working from home. • There are actions related to parking in the Council Strategy linked with town centre masterplans and supporting the economy. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an area where Members can bring local knowledge to bear. • This is an opportunity to learn from other areas. • This is an opportunity to undertake pre-decision scrutiny. 	3
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be handled as an item at a scheduled meeting. • Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2023/24 municipal year. 	3
	TOTAL	13

NB: It has been confirmed that the parking Strategy will go to Executive for approval on 8 February 2024, which will be before the next available Scrutiny Commission meeting on 27 February. Therefore, it is recommended that this should not be included in the work programme.

Topic:	Asset Review	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to consider whether disposal of assets is in the best interest of the Council and if alternative options have been fully considered. 	
Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u> ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members have cited public concerns regarding risk from Council's making property investment. • Recent article in the Economist about reduced productivity when working from home. • Building running costs are significant, which impact on Council tax bills. 	2
<u>A</u> rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple wards 	2
<u>P</u> erformance / <u>P</u> riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council owns / leases a significant number of properties. Some of these (e.g. Market Street) are nearing the end of their service life and maintenance costs are increasing. Others are now surplus to requirements as a result of the move to hybrid working under Timelord 2. There is an opportunity to reduce costs, derive an income from leasing buildings or generate capital receipts from the sale of buildings. • Rationalisation of corporate buildings and co-location of Council Services is one of the six priority areas listed under the Council Strategy Priority 1.B - Transform the way the Council works to deliver operational excellence. 	3
<u>E</u> ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope for the Assets Review has yet to be agreed. However, high level principles have been prepared and initial efforts are looking at the running cost, purpose, and carbon impacts of WBC buildings. It would be sensible to wait until the draft recommendations are available. • The Commission may be able to add value by ensuring that the review has considered all options for future use of the buildings and has fully taken account of all costs and impacts. 	3
<u>R</u> esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be handled as a single item on one of the scheduled meeting agendas, or at a dedicated meeting and could be programmed from 2024/25. 	3
TOTAL		13

Topic:	% of Children on Free School Meals Who Achieve a Good Level of Development at Foundation Stage	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance has been consistently amongst the lowest of any local authority in England. 	
Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of public / media concern, but... Will be of great concern to affected families. Consistently flagged in WBC performance reports. Identified as a priority for scrutiny by Exec Members and senior officers. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of persistent gap in attainment between those on free school meals and other children (currently 35.8% vs 64.8%) West Berks is amongst the poorest performing local authorities in England for this indicator (4th quartile). '<i>Create a plan to close attainment gap: focus on early years and deprivation</i>' is an action in the Council Plan. 	3
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are ongoing efforts to address the issue through schools, but many local schools are academies, so are outside of LA control. Need to understand what approaches have already been explored. Difficult for schools to do much where they have small numbers of affected children. Could consider how other local authorities have successfully closed the outcome gap and identify if there is any learning that could be applied in West Berkshire. 	2
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex issue – would require task and finish group or dedicated meeting. Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2024/25 municipal year. 	2
TOTAL		12

Topic:	Early Years Capacity (Wraparound Care)	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to investigate the impacts for schools in West Berkshire of the Government's ambition for all schools to provide wraparound care between 8am and 6pm for school-age children by September 2026. 	
Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare costs widely reported as a significant issue for families in the national media. • But little evidence of recent reporting in local media. • Provision is good at some local schools, but poor at others. • Identified as a priority for scrutiny by senior officers. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 Budget used to announce government commitment for all schools to provide wraparound childcare by September 2023. • This is likely to be challenging for smaller schools to provide in a cost-effective manner. • No public data has been found to show how many West Berkshire schools already provide this, but a national survey showed 64% offered wraparound care, 15% before school only, 1% after school only, with 20% offering no provision. • Not a Council Strategy Priority but flagged by senior officers. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 Councils selected to trial wraparound childcare, including Wiltshire and Hampshire, so opportunities to learn from others. • Opportunity to gather evidence from local schools. 	2
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex issue – would require task and finish group. • May be best to consider this once the new arrangements are in place. • Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2024/25 municipal year. 	2
TOTAL		11

Topic:	Environment Strategy – Operational Review	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to review progress in implementing the Council’s Environment Strategy, including the agreed Delivery Plan. 	
Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple stories about environmental issues in local and national media. • High level of interest in climate and ecological issues from local community groups. • Topic not identified as a key issue by Members / senior officers. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery Plan shows most actions are on-track or have been delivered, but still a significant number are behind schedule or are yet to start. • Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency is a key theme of the draft Council Strategy. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last reviewed in August 2021. • There is an Environment Advisory Group that already oversees delivery of the Environment Strategy, so there would be an element of duplication. 	1
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be covered as an agenda item at a future meeting. • Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2023/24 municipal year. 	3
TOTAL		11

Topic:	Waste Strategy	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste is one of the biggest areas of Council expenditure. • Need to reduce environmental impacts of waste and recycling. 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste matters are of concern to residents, particularly in relation to bin collections, recycling and HWRC access. • Government recently announced reforms to local authority recycling arrangements. • There have been stories in the local media about waste and recycling matters, including issues with food waste and overflowing dog poo bins. • Phasing out charges for green bin collections is one of the Administration's Manifesto commitments. • Not identified by the Executive or senior officers as one of their priorities for scrutiny review. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire is already in the top quartile for recycling rates. • Currently only achieving satisfactory levels of street cleanliness. • Increasing the level of waste reused, recycled or composted at home, from public spaces and through our recycling centres is a priority identified in the Draft Council Plan • The current contract is costly. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Advisory Group already feeds into the development of the Waste Strategy, so there would be an element of duplication. 	1
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the strategy would be a long process, so this would require multiple updates / inputs. • Could be handled as standing items at scheduled meetings. • Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2023/24 municipal year. 	3
TOTAL		11

Topic:	Royal Mail	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor quality of service, with many communities receiving infrequent / irregular mail deliveries. 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic is of concern to local residents, with anecdotal evidence of patients missing medical appointments as a result of mail not being delivered. There have been articles in the national and local media about the poor performance of Royal Mail. This has not been identified as a scrutiny priority by Executive Members of senior officers. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is widespread evidence of poor performance, with some communities in West Berkshire only receiving post once or twice per week and some communities did not have post for two months. There were issues with postal votes not being delivered to the Council offices at the May 2023 elections. Nationally, Royal Mail is failing to meet its targets for delivery of first and second class mail. The service is provided by a third party, so it is not covered by the Council Strategy. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Mail is not obliged to attend to give evidence to the Scrutiny Commission or act upon any of its recommendations. Ofcom has already opened an investigation into the Royal Mail's failure to meet its delivery targets for 2022/23. Ofcom is also undertaking a wider review of the Royal Mail and will provide advice on how the universal postal service might need to evolve to better reflect the changing needs of postal users. 	1
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be handled as an item at a special scrutiny meeting. Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2023/24 municipal year. 	3
TOTAL		11

Topic:	Broken Market for Children’s Social Care Placements	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising demand and lack of availability leading to high cost of children’s care home placements. 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no evidence that this is a particular concern for local residents. • Some articles in the national media. • Identified as a priority for scrutiny by Exec Members. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social care costs for children are very high and there has been considerable growth in the numbers being placed in care, which is putting pressure on budgets. • Increased spend is linked to difficulties in finding foster care placements and a shortage of suitable care home places locally. • There is no evidence of poor performance by Council services. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an opportunity to learn from other areas / best practice. • Potential overlaps with other scrutiny topics such as fostering and rising demand for SEND children with complex educational needs. 	2
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex issue – would require task and finish group. • Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2024/25 municipal year. 	2
TOTAL		11

Topic:	Recruitment and Retention	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges with the Council recruiting and retaining staff. • High levels of agency staff. • Pressure of work. • Issues around career development. 	
Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little evidence of public / media concern, but... • Agency staff and recruitment costs are significant, which impact on Council tax bills. • There are articles in industry journals about the challenges local authorities face in recruiting / retaining staff, but not in the wider media. • This has been identified by senior officers as a priority. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover is running at around 15%, which is lower than the public sector average. • Vacant posts were running at 373.2 FTE in May 2023. • The Council has been struggling to recruit staff to certain services (e.g., social care) and so usage of agency staff is high, leading to high levels of spend. Agency spend has fallen due to tighter controls on recruitment. • Considering ways to improve our recruitment processes whilst reducing agency costs is one of the six priority areas listed under the Council Strategy Priority 1.B - Transform the way the Council works to deliver operational excellence. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be duplication with the work of the Personnel Committee. • Work is already underway to address the issue. 	1
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be handled as a single item on one of the scheduled meeting agendas, or at a dedicated meeting and could be programmed from 2024/25. 	3
TOTAL		11

Topic:	Housing	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising costs of living are making housing unaffordable for some residents. • Rising mortgage costs are unaffordable for some landlords. • Concerns about the management of the Housing Register. • Concerns about a lack of engagement by the social housing sector. • Need to accommodate asylum seekers 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents have raised concerns with local ward members about management of the housing register. • There have been local media articles about asylum seekers sleeping in tents outside the Council offices. • This has not been raised as a priority for scrutiny by Exec Members / senior officers. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is anecdotal evidence of residents' concerns about management of the housing register. • There is no evidence of poor performance by Council services. • The Council Strategy identifies the following priorities related to housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify solutions for homelessness ○ Create housing forum for tenants ○ Deliver more houses for Social Rent and Affordable Rent ourselves and through joint ventures. 	2
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a complex and wide-ranging issue, with a number of macro-economic / political factors that are outside of the Council's control. It may be better to have a tighter focus on a particular aspect of housing where there is potential for scrutiny to have an impact. • Cost of living / housing issues are being picked up by the Health and Wellbeing Board to a limited extent. 	1
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex issue – would require task and finish group. • Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2024/25 municipal year. 	2
TOTAL		10

Topic:	Libraries Service	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about funding model - failure to secure parish council contributions has left a budget shortfall. 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous articles in the national media about library closures due to a lack of funding. Article in the local media about insufficient staff cover. There is no evidence that libraries are a concern for local residents, but valued by those who used them as 'warm spaces' last winter. This has not been identified as a potential scrutiny topic by senior officers. 	2
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are considerable funding pressures on the Libraries Service, with a number of town / parish councils not contributing. There is no evidence of customer dissatisfaction, but visitor numbers have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels. There is no evidence of poor performance. Libraries are not a priority identified within the Council Strategy. 	1
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny previously considered the findings of the 2021/22 Libraries Review at the March 2023 meeting. The Executive report on options for improving the Libraries Service is shown as deferred in the Forward Plan. 	1
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be considered at a future meeting. May be best to consider this once the 2024/25 budget has been confirmed. 	3
TOTAL		10

Topic:	Retendering of Bus Services	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to improve accessibility to services for local residents. • Need to reduce bus subsidy costs. • Increased bus usage is required to tackle congestion. 	
Criteria		
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus services are important to those who rely upon them. • However, there is little evidence of widespread public interest and no media articles highlighting issues or concerns. • Neither Executive Members nor senior officers have identified this as a priority for a scrutiny review. 	1
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide 	3
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to identify any major concerns. • The Draft Council Strategy indicates that the Council will seek to develop a Public Transport Strategy – this may be a more useful point for Scrutiny Commission to engage. 	1
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Advisory Group would feed into the Bus Strategy, so there would be an element of duplication. 	1
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be handled as an item at a scheduled meeting. • Subject to prioritisation, review could be started within 2023/24 municipal year. 	3
TOTAL		9

Topic:	Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Plan	
Key Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The delivery plan has stalled due to a lack of staff resource. 	
Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u> ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little evidence of public / media concern, but... Was flagged as an issue by the Council's previous Heritage Champion. Members of the Fees and Charges Task Group wanted to review the finances of Shaw House. Not identified by Exec Members / senior officers as a priority for a scrutiny review. 	1
<u>A</u> rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District-wide 	3
<u>P</u> erformance / <u>P</u> riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy is not currently being implemented due to a sustained vacancy. The Council Strategy includes the following goal: 'Work with partners to maintain a safe District and improve Health and Wellbeing. Increase visits to Council leisure and cultural facilities'. However, it does not feature strongly in the strategy. 	2
<u>E</u> ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main issue appears to be a lack of staff resource. Until this has been addressed, there is little for Scrutiny to review. 	1
<u>R</u> esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be handled as a single item on one of the scheduled meeting agendas, but there are competing topics that are considered more important. 	1
TOTAL		8

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