

Notice of Meeting



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Executive

Thursday 22 May 2025 at 6.00 pm

**in the Council Chamber, Council Offices,
Market Street, Newbury**

Note: This meeting can be streamed live here: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 14 May 2025

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) on 01635 519052, e-mail: sadie.owen1@westberks.gov.uk

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



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

To:	Councillors Jeff Brooks (Chairman), Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Iain Cottingham, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines (Vice-Chairman), Stuart Gourley, Justin Pemberton and Vicky Poole
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Agenda

Part I

	Pages
1. Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	5 - 6
2. Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 3 April 2025.	7 - 12
3. 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 .	13 - 14
4. Public Questions Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.	15 - 16
5. Petitions Councillors or Members of the public may present any petition which they have received. These will normally be referred to the appropriate Committee without discussion.	17 - 18

Items as timetabled in the Forward Plan

	Pages
6. Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report and Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh (EX4649) Purpose: to present the Annual Progress Report on the Environment Strategy covering the fourth year of the delivery of the Strategy from July 2023 to July 2024, and to propose for approval the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh which aims to focus activity on meeting the target of net zero emissions by 2030 for the Council.	19 - 128
7. Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge progress review 2025 (EX4689) Purpose: to publish the results of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge progress review for West Berkshire Council, which was received by the Council on the 10 April 2025.	129 - 160



Agenda - Executive to be held on Thursday 22 May 2025 (continued)

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|-------|---|-----------|
| 8. | LGA Peer Review - Children's Safeguarding (EX4688)
Purpose: to share the feedback, findings and recommendation from a recent LGA Peer Review in Children's Services. | 161 - 202 |
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| 9. | Carers Strategy 2025-2028 (EX4617)
Purpose: to seek agreement to publish the Carers Strategy, which is a key document in setting out how the Council will support carers in the district. | 203 - 276 |
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| 10. | Members' Questions
Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by Councillors in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution. | 277 - 278 |
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Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Interim Executive Director: -Resources

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Sadie Owen on telephone (01635) 519052.

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Item 1 – Apologies for absence

Verbal Item

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DRAFT

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

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 3 APRIL 2025

Councillors Present: Jeff Brooks (Chairman), Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Iain Cottingham, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines (Vice-Chairman), Stuart Gourley, Justin Pemberton and Vicky Poole

Also Present: Councillors Dominic Boeck, Richard Somner, Jo Stewart, Adrian Abbs and Clive Hooker

Officers Present: Sam Chiverton (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice), Sarah Clarke (Interim Executive Director – Resources), Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care), Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director – Finance, Property & Procurement), Joseph Holmes (Interim Chief Executive), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director – Place), Neil Goddard (Service Director – Education and SEND), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) and Nicola Thomas (Service Lead – Legal and Democratic)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillors Ross Mackinnon, Howard Woollaston, David Marsh, and Carolyne Culver

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 13 February and 19 March 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

Councillor Dominic Boeck referred to the minutes of 19 March and clarified his comment relating to Ridgeway Council. His query was how children and young people would fare under a new local authority, regardless of the available options for local government reorganisation.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions is available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As.](#)

4. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

5. Contract for Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive (EX4662)

Councillor Iain Cottingham introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 6), which provided details of forthcoming supply, service and works contract awards that would have a contract value in excess of £2.5m, and as such would require approval from Executive during the next quarter.

Councillor Heather Codling reported that work was progressing well with the Falkland Modular Replacement and that construction would commence in the summer.

Councillor Jeff Brooks seconded the recommendation within the report.

Recommendation: (Vote to be taken in Part II)

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- Executive to delegate authority to an individual (Service Director) to proceed with the award of the contract in the table below in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder, following the completion of the appropriate procurement process and Procurement Board approval of a Contract Award report.

Contract Title	Service Area	Budget (inc. tolerance)	Contract planned start date	Procurement Process	Evaluation weightings	Proposed Contract Term (years)	Estimated contract term award value	Tender Status
Royal Berkshire Archives Extension	Communities and Wellbeing	The project is £2,508,000. This comprises contributions from 6 Local Authorities.	July 2025	Restricted Tender	60% Price 40% Quality (including 10% Social Value)	1 Year	£2,445,600	Tender published in February 2025
Falkland Modular Replacement	Education	£3,656,342	25th July 2025	Restricted Tender	60% Price 40% Quality (including 10% Social Value)	1 Year	£3,381,669	Tender published in February 2025

6. 2024/25 Performance Report Q3 (EX4542)

Councillor Jeff Brooks introduced a report (Agenda Item 7), which provided assurance that the priority areas in the Council Strategy 2023-2027 were being managed effectively, and where performance had fallen below the expected level, presented information on the remedial action taken and the impact of that action.

Councillor Brooks highlighted the change in presentation which he hoped made the report more accessible and commented that lack of data should be a rare occurrence in future reports. Councillor Brooks noted that Executive Directors had been urged to reduce the number of red RAG rated performance indicators by the following quarter.

Councillor Dominic Boeck agreed that the presentation had improved but suggested that the layout of Appendix A was difficult to read. Councillor Brooks queried whether Appendix A added any substance to the report.

Councillor Boeck referred to performance indicator 37 which referred to the percentage of Children in Care who had three or more placements during the past year and queried why the target had not been met. Councillor Heather Codling reported that there were a variety of reasons for placement movement, but that the area was scrutinised regularly by the team's performance board and Corporate Parent Panel and was an improving area.

Councillor Brooks commented that future reports would include a trend arrow with the year-to-date data.

RESOLVED that: Executive

- Note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2027 priorities scheduled for this financial year.
- Review those areas where performance is below target i.e., reporting as 'Red' or 'Amber', and note that the appropriate remedial action is in place.
- Note that whilst the review process of the measures of the Council Strategy Delivery Plan is ongoing, this report presents performance results against the measures currently in place – noting pending recommendations where those exist - and in accordance with the established reporting guidelines, which classify the measures into High Priority and Business as Usual, with the latter reported by exception.

7. **Waste Management Strategy**

Councillor Stuart Gourley introduced and proposed a report (Agenda Item 8), which sought approval for the adoption of the Council's new Waste Management Strategy. Councillor Gourley recognised the importance of the waste service to residents but suggested that this should not restrict looking to improve the efficiency of the service and striving for the disposal of waste and recycling to be the most effective and efficient that it could be.

It was highlighted that the Strategy set out the Council's key priorities and themes until 2032. It was noted that there had been considerable consultation with several stakeholders, including public consultation, public meetings and review by Scrutiny Commission. Councillor Gourley thanked all residents that had participated in the consultation.

Councillor Adrian Abbs commented that he would not be recommending the Strategy for approval if he had remained Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity. He noted that the overwhelming feedback from residents was not to move to a three-weekly collection. Councillor Abbs queried why the Council was not considering alternatives, and why the Council was requiring residents to separate more waste when there were barriers to doing so. Councillor Gourley responded that the number of kerbside containers had not increased, and that the recently launched pots, tubs and trays would be contained by the existing plastic collection boxes.

Councillor Abbs queried why a report on alternatives had not been produced. Councillor Gourley responded that he preferred that the Council took the approach of recycling responsibly to ensure that the recycling remained in the UK. He commented that the better the quality of the recycling, the better the reuse value would be.

Councillor Abbs queried why there had been a public consultation when the response had been ignored. Councillor Gourley noted that the response to the consultation reflected that over 50% of residents could support a three-weekly collection.

Councillor Abbs suggested that it would be difficult to persuade people to use real nappies rather than disposable ones. Councillor Gourley understood the challenge but stated that the technology of reusable nappies had improved significantly. Councillor Gourley acknowledged that disposable nappies would still be preferred and urged that they be disposed of responsibly in a nappy sack and then a black bin.

Councillor Abbs suggested that it would be difficult to change residents' habits. Councillor Gourley recognised that it may be difficult but suggested that there had probably been similar conversations when the change to fortnightly collections had been implemented. Councillor Gourley further noted that West Berkshire was not an outlier in moving to three-weekly collections.

Councillor Jo Stewart referred to the action plan and the starting date of 2026 for strengthening the commitment to combat littering and fly tipping, and queried whether it could commence sooner, with a campaign aimed at schools. Councillor Gourley reported that schools had been requested to develop an environment action plan, which would allow for close liaison with the Council and allow for some influence to highlight specific issues.

Councillor Richard Somner commented that he was speaking on behalf of the 71% of residents that did not support three weekly collections and queried whether performance would be monitored. Councillor Somner queried the timescale for reversing the decision, should the new collection rota fail. Councillor Gourley acknowledged that it would be important to monitor the change and review the Service, but that a reasonable timeframe

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for bedding in and supporting the change would be required before any rash decisions were made to reverse.

In response to Councillor Abbs' earlier comments, Councillor Nigel Foot suggested that it was possible to change people's attitudes, particularly by engaging with younger people.

In response to a query from Councillor Iain Cottingham as to how to improve the current 42% black bin recycling rate, Councillor Gourley noted that WBC were the seventeenth highest improved local authority out of 320. However, he acknowledged that the Council were still in the top twenty-five of worst Council's in terms of rubbish per household and consequently there was a need to shift the focus from putting everything in a black bin to recycling.

Councillor Dominic Boeck queried whether the 42% figure was currently recycled by West Berkshire Council. Councillor Gourley clarified that the figure did not relate to what was currently being done but referred to 42% of black bin bag contents that could be recycled through one of the suggested routes.

Councillor Denise Gaines seconded the recommendation within the report, noting that the Strategy applied to the next eight years and set out clearly the priorities and intentions of the Council. Councillor Gaines noted that technology was always developing and in the future the level of recycling could vastly improve. Councillor Gaines also suggested that people could be persuaded to change habits through education and involving children.

RESOLVED that:

- The recommendation is to approve the adoption of the new Waste Management Strategy, attached as Appendix C.
- This decision includes endorsing the strategic actions outlined in the strategy to improve waste management across West Berkshire. Key elements include:
 - changing the frequency of black bin collections from once every fortnight to once every three weeks
 - reviewing the container provision for recyclable waste
 - implementing broader measures to reduce waste, improve recycling rates, and enhance the improving the local street scene.

8. Members' Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions is available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As.](#)

9. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006. Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers.

10. Contract for Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive (EX4662)

(Paragraph 6 – information relating to proposed action to be taken by the Local Authority)

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 11), which related to the forthcoming supply, service and works contract awards that would have a contract value in excess of £2.5m and as such would require approval from Executive during the next quarter.

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RESOLVED that: the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

Other options considered: the approval of a consolidated contract award report is considered the most efficient way of meeting the governance requirements of the Constitution, therefore no alternative proposals are being made.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.05 pm)

CHAIRMAN
Date of Signature

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Item 3 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Item 4 – Public Questions

To follow

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Executive – 22 May 2025

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report and Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	22 May 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Report Author:	Jenny Graham
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4649

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- (a) present the Annual Progress Report on the Environment Strategy covering the fourth year of the delivery of the Strategy from July 2023 to July 2024, and;
- (b) to propose for approval the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh which aims to focus activity on meeting the target of net zero emissions by 2030 for the Council

2 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Executive:

- (a) note the Annual Progress Report on the Environment Strategy (as included in Appendix C) and agree its publication on the Council's website, and;
- (b) approve the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh (as included in Appendix D) and agree its publication on the Council's website including the associated Delivery Plan (Appendix E) and Carbon Definitions Report (Appendix F).

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no direct funding implications as a result of this report. Projects and actions already underway are funded using existing approved budgets. Teams across the Council use the budget setting process to plan for future programmes and secure funding for them. It has been made clear where

	projects that are not yet funded have been included in the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh for illustrative purposes. Before these projects progress any further (if considered appropriate) business cases and funding bids would be required along with formal budget approval.			
Human Resource:	There are no direct HR implications as a result of this report.			
Legal:	There are no direct Legal implications as a result of this report.			
Risk Management:	A high-level risk register has been developed for the Environment Strategy. This is kept up to date and the Environment Delivery Project Board is used to keep it under review.			
Property:	There are no direct property implications as a result of this report. Whilst there are projects discussed or indicated in the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh that impact on the Council's property portfolio, these are projects that are already approved or are being used as illustrative only and nothing new is being proposed through this report.			
Policy:	This annual report and the strategy refresh aim to demonstrate how the Environment Strategy is being delivered and will continue to be delivered and will play a part in informing and shaping relevant Council policies and plans across the organisation. In particular this year we are reporting the development of a Sustainability Assessment Tool which will assist in increasing the influence and understanding of the Environment Strategy and how the Council can address the climate and ecological emergencies as well as other important health and wellbeing outcomes through its policies, plans and events.			
	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		No impact directly. Across the Delivery Plan on a project by project basis, equalities should be considered through the PMM process to ensure there are no negative impacts.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		No impact directly. Across the Delivery Plan this will need to be dealt with on a project by project basis through the PMM process to ensure delivery does not have a negative impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics.
Environmental Impact:	X			<p>The purpose of the annual report is to demonstrate the delivery of the Environment Strategy which seeks to have a positive impact on the environment in numerous ways. The Strategy Refresh serves to focus the work of the Council in order to achieve its primary target of achieving net zero by 2030 for Council activities. The ecological emergency declared in October 2023 adds to the published Environment Strategy as an additional focus for positive environmental impacts.</p> <p>As the projects within the Delivery Plan are implemented there is consideration in the detailed planning stages as to whether there are unintended negative environmental impacts that require mitigation.</p>
Health Impact:	X			The projects and activities within the Delivery Plan that have a focus on carbon reduction will have health benefits through a reduction in air pollution. Some projects delivered to date are not purely focused on outcomes that reduce carbon and seek to improve health and wellbeing as a key benefit.

ICT Impact:		X		There is not a significant ICT impact.
Digital Services Impact:		X		There is not a significant impact on Digital Services.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The main Council Priority to which the projects and actions within the Delivery Plan contribute is tackling the climate and ecological emergency . They do this in many ways but will have a key focus on achieving net zero and enhancing biodiversity.
Core Business:	X			<p>As a result of projects delivered the Council will see some of its core business processes improved as the Environment Strategy continues to have an impact.</p> <p>For example, the implementation of the Social Value Policy that includes environmental factors is having a positive impact on our procurement outcomes and how they can align with the Environment Strategy and bring environmental benefits. The use of the Sustainability Assessment Tool will also have a positive impact on the Council's core business activities.</p>
Data Impact:		X		It is not envisaged that there will be any data impacts.

<p>Consultation and Engagement:</p>	<p>The Environment Advisory Group (EAG), including at the Open Forum (OF), have received updates as the Environment Strategy has been refreshed. This has involved presentations and the opportunity for feedback. The EAG OF are kept up to date with key projects throughout the year.</p> <p>The West Berkshire Town and Parish Council Climate Forum have been kept up to date with progress in refreshing the Environment Strategy through their regular meetings.</p> <p>The West Berkshire Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership have also been kept up to date and received a presentation on the refreshed strategy and delivery plan at their last meeting.</p> <p>Various teams across the Council have contributed to and been consulted on the Annual Progress Report and the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh. This has included officers who attend the Environment Delivery Project Board and the Active Travel Officer Coordination Group.</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Progress Report for the Environment Strategy and demonstrate the work that has taken place to propose a focused Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh
- 4.2 The Annual Progress Report specifically covers the period from July 2023 through to July 2024. It is, however, part of the continuous story of how the Council is addressing climate change, biodiversity enhancements and other environmental issues in West Berkshire.
- 4.3 The Annual Progress Report is included in Appendix C and sets out actions and achievements under each strategic objective of the original Environment Strategy including case studies and examples from the communities across West Berkshire. The report also looks forward to key projects on the horizon demonstrating the momentum that exists, and the significant investment being made in planning some of our larger infrastructure projects.
- 4.4 An important part of the report is to provide an update on the Council's carbon footprint and also to report on the carbon emission data for the District. The Council's carbon footprint shows a reduction for the reporting period and an overall reduction of 22% when compared to the 2019/20 baseline. Due to the lag time in data reporting for the District's emissions, the latest figures we have are for 2022.
- 4.5 The work that has taken place on refreshing the Environment Strategy now that we are halfway through the original period of 2020-2030, is set out in Appendix D. It describes how the focus of the Delivery Plan for the remaining years will be around 4 themes with some important common threads linking to all themes such as net zero and health and

wellbeing. The 4 themes are: Energy Efficiency and Renewables, Sustainable Transport, The Natural Environment and Waste Reduction and Recycling.

- 4.6 An important purpose of the Environment Strategy Refresh is to demonstrate a possible path for the Council to achieve its focus of achieving net zero by 2030. The projects already committed and contributing carbon emission reductions are mapped out and the 'gap' that is likely to remain is estimated to be 1,915 tCO₂e (down from the latest position in 2023/24 of 9,026 tCO₂e). A possible scenario showing how the 'gap' could be closed and net zero achieved by 2030 is set out for illustration purposes and to assist in the consideration of future plans, projects and budgets.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The year we are reporting on through the Annual Progress Report has been another busy one with some projects completing, others being launched and good progress being made on longer term project delivery. The highlights of the year can be found in Section 3 of the Annual Progress Report (Appendix C).
- 5.2 There are two key strands of action:
- reducing the Council's own carbon emissions with actions from across the organisation contributing to this,
 - engaging with key stakeholders and encouraging and facilitating action in local communities to help reduce carbon emissions within the District.
- 5.3 Planning for some of our larger projects has continued during the reporting period in anticipation of these starting to be delivered in future years. This is relevant for our solar farm plans near Grazeley, further rooftop solar pv projects and the decarbonisation works at some of our larger buildings. There has still been plenty of delivery within the reporting period which has included launching the kerbo charge innovative system for supporting residents with charging their electric vehicles, delivering actions in our Bus Service Improvement Plan, responding with increased recycling and saving on food waste via the new corporate waste contract, facilitating 214 residential rooftop solar pv installations via the Solar Together scheme and continuing to engage with communities through our Environment Advisory Group Open Forum and the Town and Parish Council Climate Forum.
- 5.4 Across our communities, there has been lots of climate action with regular repair cafes, projects to support our wildlife, care for the Almond Avenue Orchard and surveying of biodiversity across our extensive length of rural verges to name just a fraction of the activity.
- 5.5 A key element of the annual reporting on the Environment Strategy is to provide an update on the Council's carbon footprint. Each year as our understanding of impacts and data improves, we endeavour to improve the quality and accuracy of our reporting. Our baseline is taken from the time the declaration of a climate emergency was made and the Environment Strategy was developed. When the latest figures for 2023/24 are compared to the baseline figures from 2019/20 a reduction of 22% in emissions is observed. The reported data for each year since the baseline was set is included in an Appendix to the Annual Progress Report.

- 5.6 There are a number of challenges for the Council in reducing its emissions. For example, Figure 3 in the Annual Progress Report shows the impact that schools have on our carbon footprint. They are by far the group of buildings that contributes the most in terms of emissions. This is because we have a large number of schools to serve our communities well and many of these education buildings are old, lack insulation and modern technology and are not energy efficient. We are addressing certain aspects through maintenance and improvements projects across the estate and are also planning more targeted decarbonisation projects focusing on those sites with the greatest emissions.
- 5.7 Moving up to the District level, the data used for monitoring the District emissions across West Berkshire comes from central government. There is a 2-year lag in the publishing of this data meaning we are reporting 2022 figures in this latest report. The figures in Table 2 of Appendix C show an encouraging overall downward trend are nearly matching the emissions recorded for the 2020 which was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore the lowest year since our baseline.
- 5.8 Following on from reporting on the progress of the fourth year of delivery, work has been taking place on refreshing the Environment Strategy. At the halfway period it is appropriate to review and consider what is required for the remaining years of the plan. There are other important and relevant reasons why a review and a refresh of the Environment Strategy has been undertaken. Some of these key reasons are set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key factors feeding into the review of the Environment Strategy:



- 5.9 Some of the important learning from the initial years of delivery were focused around the Delivery Plan. The existing Delivery Plan was considered too large and was not focused enough to deliver effective results. This has resulted in a streamlined Delivery Plan (Appendix E) with tasks arranged around 4 themes and a recognition of common threads across the themes. A number of the original actions have become business as usual or have been completed in the first few years of delivery meaning that the number of entries in the Delivery Plan is significantly reduced. This will ensure more focused delivery and easier reporting on progress against tasks.
- 5.10 The most important element of the Environment Strategy Refresh is the work to forecast the carbon footprint in future years and the possible pathway to net zero. This work has been very detailed and is based on the best evidence available. This evidence has

included specially commissioned reports, feasibility studies and project delivery information to date. In addition, the work on the pathway has been independently checked by consultants acting as a 'critical friend' to ensure the data, methodology and assumptions that have been made are all relevant and deliver a sound piece of work.

- 5.11 Due to the fast pace at which the delivery plan can change and develop, the possible projects that will contribute to our pathway to net zero will be kept under constant review. For example, the Council received good news in March of this year of success in being awarded grant funding of £2.8million for delivery of decarbonisation works at Northcroft Leisure Centre in Newbury. This funding, combined with a further £425k from Council budgets already marked for improvements at Northcroft LC, will enable a significant project to be delivered which will improve the facilities, increase efficiency and contribute well to our pathway to net zero. This scheme has been able to be included in the following list of projects which are approved and have budgets agreed. These have measurable carbon reductions that have fed into the pathway to net zero:

Project	Start year
25% WBC fleet cars and light duty vehicles that are ULEV.	2024/25
Solar Panel Installations on WBC buildings.	2024/25
Carbon sequestration on WBC owned land	2025/26
Padworth Solar Panel installations	2025/26
Grazeley Solar Farm	2026/27
HVO fuel for some waste/ recycling vehicles.	2026/27
Northcroft Leisure Centre decarbonisation works	2027/28

- 5.12 With the above projects included, the position at 2030 is that the 'gap' to net zero is 1,915 tCO₂e. This is from the latest reported position in 2023/24 of 9,026 tCO₂e. In order to demonstrate what might be needed to reduce the 'gap' to zero, the following projects and their associated carbon reductions have been used as an illustration of how the target could be achieved:

- 100% of the Council's fleet (cars and light duty vehicles) being EVs by 2030
- All waste and recycling vehicles using HVO fuel
- Additional decarbonisation projects being delivered at Council sites where initial feasibility work has been carried out

- 5.13 The inclusion of the above projects in 5.12 (as yet not approved or funded) enables the target date of net zero by 2030 to be achieved with a small amount of contingency. Consideration of the most appropriate future projects to be added to the programme will happen via the normal project planning and budget setting processes.

- 5.14 The terminology used in some of these documents can be confusing. Some terms used by West Berkshire Council have also changed since the climate emergency declaration in 2019. In order to provide clarity, a definitions report has been produced which can sit alongside the Environment Strategy Refresh and be included on the Council's website. This proposed report is included at Appendix F.

6 Other options considered

6.1 There is a commitment to report on an annual basis on progress delivering the Environment Strategy. The pattern of reporting is to look at achievements and actions from July one year through to the end of June the following year. This aligns with the approval of the Environment Strategy in July 2020. Within this the Council's carbon footprint data is captured for each financial year with the most relevant period being reported in the Annual Progress Report. The District's data, which comes from central government and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), is reported per calendar year and, again, the most up to date published position is included in the APR.

6.2 Alternative options would be:

(a) To not report on progress in delivering the Environment Strategy.

Response – Given there is a commitment to report to the Executive, this is not an option. Not to report on such an important area as carbon reduction and our journey to net zero after the Council declared a climate and ecological emergency, does not serve anyone well.

(b) To only report the Council's carbon footprint figures and the District emission data from DESNZ.

Response – This minimal reporting of figures and data may be all that is required to report progress. However, this does not present the full picture and would not provide the overview of projects, activities and policy development that all contribute to the efforts to minimise environmental impacts. A full report enables the Council and the communities of West Berkshire to demonstrate the wide range of work happening across the District and serves to inspire others through interesting case studies.

It is worth noting, however, that due to the refocusing of work and the balance between resources and delivery demands, it is likely that future annual reporting will focus on the data, include a roadmap of delivery for the year and include one case study per theme. It will not be as comprehensive as this year's report in Appendix C.

6.3 An alternative option for the Environment Strategy as a whole would be not to refresh and refocus the Strategy. This was not considered a suitable option because it would likely result in targets not being achieved due to a lack of knowledge of the latest position and the options available for effective project delivery. The process that has been undertaken has shown the value in the work considering the pathway to net zero. It provides knowledge of existing projects that will contribute to the pathway and enables consideration of future options for achieving the key target of net zero by 2030.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The annual report demonstrates the actions that have taken place to progress our work on delivering the Environment Strategy over the period from July 2023 through to July

2024. The annual report would normally be brought to Executive in the autumn following this period (autumn 2024). However, it made sense to bring the report at the same time as continuing the story in the refreshed Environment Strategy, so it has been delayed on this occasion and both are reported to the Executive together.

- 7.2 The reduction of emissions by 22% compared to the baseline, gives the figure from which the pathway to net zero in the Strategy Refresh starts. The Strategy Refresh helps to provide focus for future years of delivery and a pathway guide for tracking progress via the annual reporting.
- 7.3 The pathway included in the Environment Strategy Refresh indicates a possible scenario where net zero could be achieved. Whilst this is illustrative and not all projects have allocated or approved budgets, it does demonstrate that, given a realistic level of investment, the 2030 target is achievable.
- 7.4 With the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation likely to be impacting on West Berkshire Council between now and 2030, it could be argued that we should wait and see what happens before looking at our options for achieving net zero. The restructuring to create new unitary authorities is driven by improving outcomes, efficiency and service delivery. Therefore, West Berkshire Council has taken the view that it does not want to wait and see what happens but sees value in developing a strong and informed position from which to enter into this new phase. We have therefore maintained a clear picture of our current emissions and have a well-developed plan of how we are going to reduce our impacts.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Equity Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix B – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- 8.3 Appendix C – Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report July 2023 – July 2024
- 8.4 Appendix D – Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh
- 8.5 Appendix E – Environment Strategy Delivery Plan
- 8.6 Appendix F – Carbon Definitions Report

Background Papers:

The Environment Strategy was approved by the Executive in July 2020 – the papers relating to that decision can be found [here](#) and the [published strategy](#) is on the website.

[Previous Annual Progress Reports](#) on the Environment Strategy can be found on the Council's website.

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: The Annual Progress Report reports on actions and projects that have been delivered throughout the District and the Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh includes a Delivery Plan that will have projects for delivery across West Berkshire.

Officer details:

Name: Jenny Graham
Job Title: Environment Delivery Manager
Tel No: 01635 519623
E-mail: Jenny.Graham@westberks.gov.uk

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West Berkshire Council
Equity Impact Assessment

Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh

12 May 2025

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Place, Environment Department, Climate Change Service
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	West Berkshire Council's Environment Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Progress Report 2023 – 2024 - Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Having an Environment Strategy is an existing function of the Council. The Environment Strategy was published in July 2020
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).	<p>The change proposed is a prioritisation and re-focus of the published Environment Strategy (2020-2030). The 2025 Strategy Refresh focuses on 4 themes with common threads running through them.</p> <p>The impacts are intended to benefit climate, ecology and health and wellbeing across the district.</p> <p>The actions and tasks that make up the Delivery Plan are intended to have positive outcomes and it is not considered that they have any bias or discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community.</p> <p>Some aspects of projects and investment being affected by the nature of the district have been highlighted but these are addressed through the more detailed work of other plans and there are plenty of examples of how the organisation is addressing any impacts in appropriate and innovative ways. This can be kept under review in a number of ways as described in the assessment.</p>
Completed By	Jenny Graham, Environment Delivery Manager
Authorised By	Kofi Adu-Gyamfi, Service Lead – Climate Change
Date of Assessment	12.05.2025

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>Following the approval and publication of the Environment Strategy in July 2020, the fourth annual progress report is being presented for information and the opportunity, 5 years in, is being taken to refresh the Environment Strategy at its half-way point.</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>In recognition of the lessons learnt from the first 5 years of implementation, the Environment Strategy and its associated Delivery Plan have been reviewed and refreshed. This is ensuring that they are fit for purpose and can guide the organisation through the next 5 years and the achievement of the key target of being net zero by 2030 for council activities.</p> <p>It is important that the declared climate and ecological emergencies are well addressed in the strategy refresh and the tasks in the Delivery Plan. These are key aspects of the Council Strategy as well as being fundamental to the Environment Strategy.</p> <p>Following a broad Delivery Plan which accompanied the original strategy, it has been recognised that a more focused approach and prioritised Delivery Plan is needed to support the key activities needed to achieve net zero by 2030 and to support the district in its pathway also.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that</p>	<p>Analysis of carbon emissions over the first few years of delivery of the Environment Strategy has led to further detailed work to support the pathway to net zero and answer the question as to whether this is an achievable aim given what we have learnt to date.</p>

<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.</p>	<p>The planned projects and assessment of their emission impacts have informed the proposed pathway and options for achieving net zero. This has been mapped out alongside our partners and contractors.</p> <p>The Environment Advisory Group Open Forum and the Town and Parish Council Climate Forum have been important ways in which our communities have been linked into the conversation around climate impacts and the most effective ways of tackling the climate and ecological emergencies.</p>
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>An alternative option for the Environment Strategy would be not to refresh and refocus the Strategy. This was not considered a suitable option because it would likely result in targets not being achieved due to a lack of knowledge of the latest position and the options available for effective project delivery. The process that <u>has</u> been undertaken has shown the value in the work considering the pathway to net zero. It provides knowledge of existing projects that will contribute to the pathway and enables consideration of future options for achieving the key target of net zero by 2030.</p> <p>As there are no observed negative impacts of the chosen course of action and no community or group of people would be more or less impacted, it is considered appropriate to focus on delivering actions that focus on the declared emergencies.</p>

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less impact on a person due to their age.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to disability.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to gender reassignment.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person	N/A	N/A	N/A

				due to their marital or civil partnership status.			
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to pregnancy or maternity factors.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to their race.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to their sex.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person	N/A	N/A	N/A

				due to their sexual orientation.			
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to their religion or belief.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The nature of the district of West Berkshire means that for the 'Sustainable Travel' theme there are more options available and receiving investment in the urban areas and service centres than in the rural communities.</p> <p>Renewed focus on potential investment imbalances will ensure that rural communities receive appropriate infrastructure and investment, where practicable.</p>	Where possible rural areas are being linked to urban centres for active travel (such as Stockcross to Newbury active travel link) and bespoke transport is provided through our demand responsive services to provide a sustainable means of travel appropriate for rural areas. The Local Transport Plan, Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Strategy and the Bus Service Improvement Plan, along with the Environment Strategy, will work together to provide sustainable travel options suitable to the different areas of the district. This includes	<p>Jenny Graham, Environment Delivery Manager, WBC</p> <p>in collaboration with Emma Jameson, Transport and Parking Services Manager, WBC</p>	Through the annual review of the Environment Strategy and the implementation of the Local Transport Plan, ULEV Strategy and BSIP, the access to sustainable and low carbon modes of travel can be monitored.

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
					provision of EV charge points at suitable rural locations e.g. outside village halls, to support the decarbonisation of travel.		
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Under the theme of 'Energy Efficiency and Renewables', the Council will support and promote various domestic energy efficiency schemes. These often have eligibility criteria which includes household income. This can have a result of positively impacting on areas of deprivation more than other areas.			
Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact			

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
				on displaced communities.			
Care experienced people	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on care experienced people.			
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Progress with delivering the Environment Strategy for West Berkshire would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on the Armed Forces Community.			

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	May 2026 (whilst no adverse impacts have been identified in this assessment, we will continue to review progress and assess if new impacts emerge that were not foreseeable).
Person Responsible for Review	Jenny Graham, Environment Delivery Manager
Authorised By	Kofi Adu-Gyamfi, Service Lead – Climate Change

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:	Place
Service:	Climate Change Service, Environment Department
Team:	Environment Delivery Team
Lead Officer:	Jenny Graham
Title of Project/System:	Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh and Annual Progress Report 2023/24
Date of Assessment:	25.02.2025

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

	Yes	No
Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data? <small>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”</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will you be processing data on a large scale? <small>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension? <small>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will any decisions be automated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

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.

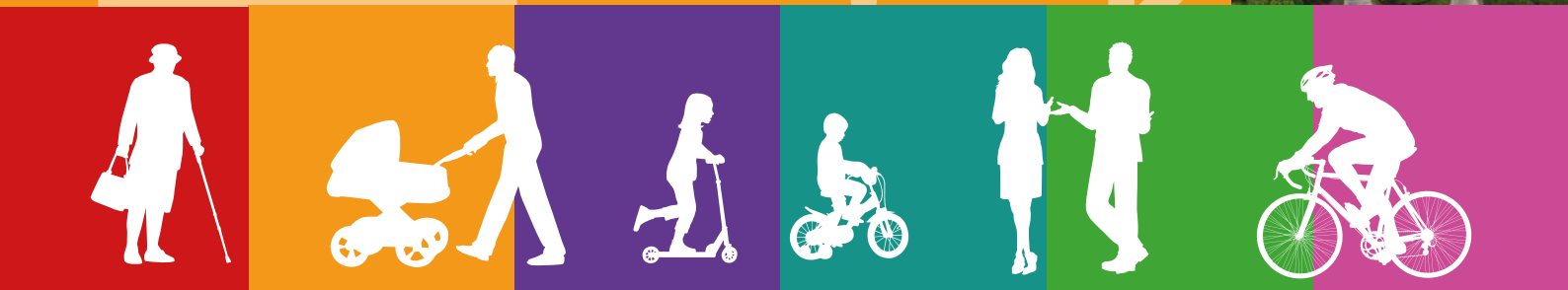
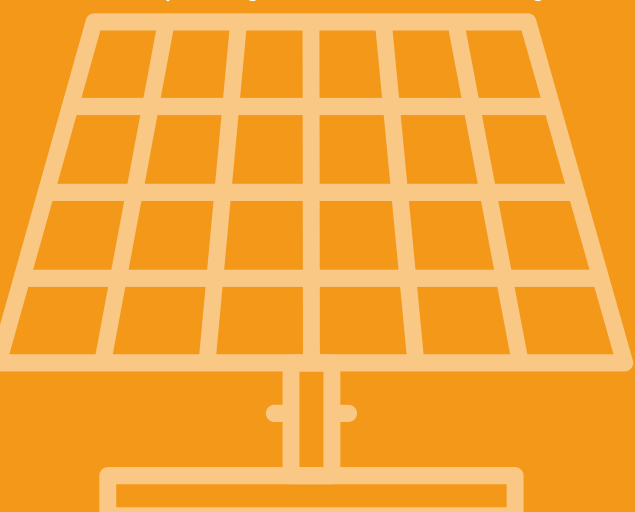
Appendix C

Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report (July 2023 - July 2024)

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Environment Strategy

Annual Progress Report
(July 2023- July 2024)



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L



Foreword

At a global, national and local level, the climate change and ecological emergencies remain some of the most significant challenges we face.

As a Council, we are continuing to work hard to address these challenges. Since our last Annual Report, we have declared an 'ecological emergency' in West Berkshire and are strengthening our actions to address this. We are also making good progress towards reaching our Net Zero target by 2030 through delivering the projects in our Environment Strategy Delivery Plan.

As a Council, we are continuing to work hard to address these challenges. Since our last Annual Report, we have declared an 'ecological emergency' in West Berkshire and are strengthening our actions to address this. We are also making good progress towards reaching our Net Zero target by 2030 through delivering the projects in our Environment Strategy Delivery Plan.

This additional work, including the projects we will need to focus on in the next five years to help us reach Net Zero, is reported as part of a refreshed Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan. These have been developed in line with the Council Strategy. The refreshed Environment Strategy also incorporates the ecological emergency declaration and the actions the Council is taking to bring about nature recovery and enhancements.

Looking forward, I would like to highlight a few key areas of action and delivery that will have a positive impact in delivering our environmental work and reducing emissions both in relation to Council activities and across the District of West Berkshire as a whole:

- The process of reviewing the Local Plan has included the development of a number of ambitious policies which aim to support mitigating and adapting to Climate Change.
- We have been awarded funding from the Government to undertake nutrient mitigation projects which will support addressing the ecological emergency and unlock development in the River Lambourn catchment area.
- The publication of a new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) in summer 2025 will outline the transport-related challenges and opportunities facing the district and provide an approach to help ensure a modern transport system is delivered for West Berkshire.

Over the forthcoming year work will begin on delivering our solar farm near Grazeley. We will continue our work with nature-based solutions supporting carbon sequestration, delivering Biodiversity Net Gain and responding to Nutrient Neutrality regulations within the River Lambourn catchment area. We will also continue the roll-out of electric vehicle charging points across the district and retrofit solar Photovoltaics (PVs) on our buildings.

As a Council, we need to ensure that we lead the way in tackling climate change and ecology issues over the coming months and years, but we can't do it alone. By working together, building strong partnerships and sharing best practice we can all continue to be successful together.

After 18 months now, as the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways, I continue to be humbled and inspired by the great work that individuals, parish and town councils, groups and communities are doing to help deliver a greener, cleaner West Berkshire. I am keen to continue listening and receiving ideas, improvements and feedback on how we approach, and mitigate Climate change, especially as we move closer to 2030. I look forward to continuing engaging with wider stakeholders across West Berkshire in the shape of business, parish and town councils, organisations and landowners to continue to improve our District.

"We are living at odds with the natural world - and it is buckling under the pressure of our actions...If we are to keep this planet liveable for our children and grandchildren, we must act urgently... We can and must change our relationship with the natural world. "

(Prince William quote from video message played at a Campaign for Nature event at the General Assembly of the United Nations, in New York 2024)

Councillor Stuart Gourley
Executive Member for Environment
and Highways



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The importance of taking climate action is urgent as we witness more frequent, extreme global weather events. Summer 2024 was the Earth's warmest on record, according to the Copernicus Climate Change Service ¹.
- 1.2 **'Every breath of air we take, every mouthful of food that we take, comes from the natural world. And if we damage the natural world, we damage ourselves.'** – Sir David Attenborough ²
- 1.3 On 2nd July 2019, West Berkshire Council unanimously declared a climate emergency. As part of this commitment to act, we continue to work towards our target of achieving net zero carbon for Council activities by 2030 and to support, encourage and facilitate net zero across West Berkshire. We recognise that the task is significant and to achieve our ambitions everyone must work together.
- 1.4 Following the declaration and building on the work already underway, an Environment Strategy was written and published in July 2020. We published our inaugural annual report on delivery of the Environment Strategy

in November 2021 and this, our fourth annual report, highlights the actions, achievements and progress from July 2023 to July 2024. An important development this year has been the declaration of an ecological emergency in October 2023.

- 1.5 Our annual reports form part of our commitment to keep everyone informed, as well as to describe the measures we still need to take on our journey towards net zero.
- 1.6 This report compares the Council's baseline carbon footprint (from 2019/20) with the latest data for 2023/24. It also provides the most up to date published figures indicating the emissions occurring across the District of West Berkshire.

Explanations and meanings for a number of terms used in this document can be found in our glossary. The glossary was created following feedback during our public consultation in Spring 2021 and is included as Appendix C.

¹ <https://climate.copernicus.eu/>

² <https://ecoclubofficial.com/our-favorite-quotes-from-david-attenborough/>

2. Background Information

2.1 The Environment Strategy, developed after an extensive period of consultation, describes the vision for West Berkshire's environment and specifically how the district needs to respond to climate change. We are in the process of updating the Environment Strategy, building upon what we've learnt, to streamline the actions and focus on carbon reduction activities.

2.2 Our Environment Strategy Delivery Plan provides a framework of actions, projects and responsibilities to show how we are working to achieve the aims within the Environment Strategy. These actions have been categorised in accordance with the strategic objectives from the Environment Strategy, shown below. Please note that the way the Delivery Plan is organised is due to change shortly as part of refreshing the Strategy and more accurately reflecting the focus of our work.



2.3 We are committed to continuous improvement and are currently refocusing some actions in the Delivery Plan, to ensure our limited resources are used effectively. The Delivery Plan acts as a basis for us to work from. The plan will remain 'live' and be continuously developing between now and 2030.

2.4 As a direct result of the declaration of a climate emergency for West Berkshire, an Environment Delivery Team was established to help deliver and coordinate these actions as well as engage and work with residents, partners, schools, businesses and community groups.

2.5 To help monitor progress across the organisation, an Environment Delivery Project Board meets regularly involving representatives from key service areas. Its role is to ensure the actions within the Delivery Plan are reported on regularly and progress is monitored accurately. As a direct result of regularly monitoring progress, the Council is able to deliver on its commitment to keep an up-to-date version of the Delivery Plan published on the website.

2.6 To strengthen the importance of climate action within the organisation and to add capacity to the management of this function, the 'Climate Change Service' was created within the Environment Department in April 2023. The role of 'Service Lead for Climate Change' heads up the Climate Change Service, helping to provide a greater focus and to raise the profile of climate matters more widely.

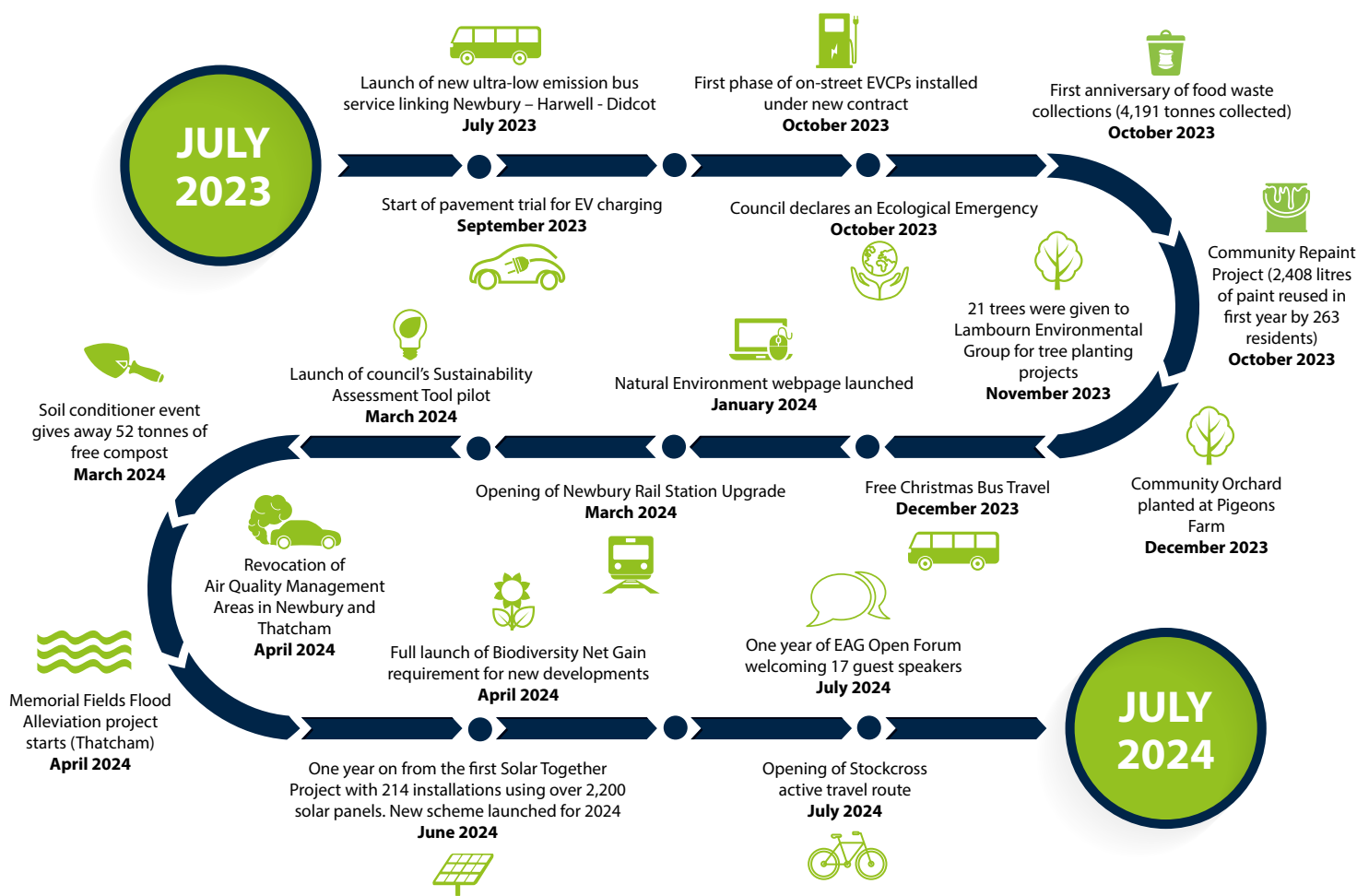
3. The Fourth Year - summary of actions and achievements

- 3.1 The fourth year of delivery of the Environment Strategy has seen wide ranging action and achievements across the Council and within the communities of West Berkshire. Figure 1 shows the highlights in our 'roadmap of the year'. Appendix A contains this roadmap alongside previous roadmaps used to communicate the highlights since our Environment Strategy was published in July 2020.
- 3.2 There have been some significant milestones achieved in projects over the year such as the launch of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for new developments, which requires

developers to ensure there is a measurable improvement (10%) to wildlife habitats than there was prior to development. This will help protect precious habitats within West Berkshire.

- 3.3 The roadmap is followed by details of actions and achievements against each strategic objective of the Environment Strategy, including further information on what has been happening during the year.

Figure 1: Highlights of delivery of the Environment Strategy July 2023 – July 2024



Carbon Neutral by 2030

NB. We have updated our terminology to Net Zero by 2030 and this will be reflected in our updated Environment Strategy. The 2030 date relates to the target for Council emissions whilst we will also engage in actions that help to reduce and influence district emissions. This section includes activities that reduce carbon emissions for West Berkshire as a district, as well as West Berkshire Council as an organisation.



Kerbo Charge system launches

West Berkshire residents now have the opportunity to charge their EVs easily from their homes, even if they don't have a driveway! After a successful trial, the Council approved the use of the [innovative Kerbo Charge system](#) across the district. This initiative will not only revolutionise how residents can charge their EVs from home, but it will also help reduce CO2 emissions in West Berkshire and improve air quality. Another big benefit is that once it's installed, residents can save an average of £1,715 a year (compared to solely using rapid chargers).

Here's how it works: when a resident wants to charge their car, residents simply insert their charging cable into the channel, and the specially designed lid closes behind it like a zip, eliminating unsightly and hazardous cables stretching across footpaths. This provides increased safety by removing trip hazards from trailing cables.

The channel is slim and shallow making installation quick with minimal impact on the existing footway. It is made of PVC which has a significantly lower carbon footprint than aluminium, has a life expectancy of over 100 years, and will not be targeted by metal thieves.



Solar Together Berkshire

In 2023, our West Berkshire community embraced green energy through the Solar Together Berkshire initiative, run by [IChoosr](#) and [West Berkshire Council](#).

More than a quarter of all carbon emissions comes from households, which means our homes play a crucial role in achieving net zero. Switching to solar photovoltaic (PV) energy is an excellent way to reduce carbon emissions and decrease electricity bills.

With 214 rooftop solar installations completed, totalling 0.92 MW of panels, we've reduced the district's carbon footprint by 178.4 tonnes per year. 85% of participants opted for battery storage, highlighting the community's commitment to energy independence. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the scheme, reflected in an impressive 86% overall approval rating.

Solar Together Berkshire 2023 was a shining success and this motivated us to keep the momentum going and deliver the same opportunities in 2024 to move to a more sustainable future.

Heat Decarbonisation Plans

In July 2023, the Council was awarded Low Carbon Skills Funding to be able to undertake building heating system audits for 5 of its buildings and the creation of individual building specific Heat Decarbonisation Plans (HDPs). This project included undertaking more detailed technical surveys for 1 of the 5 buildings to enable a future capital funding bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme in October 2024. The HDPs were completed in March 2024 and are being used to better understand how the Council can reduce its heating associated carbon emissions.

Building on the previous success in Phase 4 of the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF), the Council was successful in its application for further grant funding under Phase 5 of the LCSF. This funding, awarded in June 2024, will be used over the coming year to create a heat decarbonisation strategy for 13 of the Council's buildings, and an 'Investment Grade' technical design Heat Decarbonisation Plan for one of the Council's Primary Schools.



Responsible Economic Growth

Newbury station redevelopment complete

The redevelopment of Newbury station is now complete with three business growth units offering new employment opportunities for the town. These units will become available from autumn 2025 when all utilities will be connected, and this unique location can be promoted to support local business.

The Engine Shed Business Growth Units will help support Newbury's economic development and form part of a wider transformation of the station which has included new customer facilities, new ticket gates, a multi-storey car park, cycle hubs and improved pedestrian access.

Work to transform the station started in 2018 with the installation of a footbridge with lifts,

two new cycle hubs adding 300 cycle spaces, and forecourt works.

Completion of station building works on the north side followed, with seven new ticket gates - five in the ticketing area and two for crowd relief - an open-plan ticket area, enlarged waiting room, café and toilets.

The south side station building has also been enlarged to enable relocation of staff offices, while a new, enlarged canopy with a heritage look has been provided to house seven new ticket gates and a ticket vending machine, giving customers and staff better shielding from adverse weather.

West Berkshire Council has worked closely with Great Western Railway, Berkshire LEP, Network Rail and Grainger Plc to provide an enhanced customer experience. The Council secured significant investment in the project via Berkshire LEP's allocation of government's Local Growth Fund.

This major project delivering numerous customer benefits is hoped to facilitate and encourage more people to leave their car at home and choose to travel more sustainably. Rail travel creates 10 times less carbon emissions per passenger than the equivalent car journey.

Hectors Way link road complete

The new Kings Road link road, called Hectors Way has been completed. This was part of the Sterling Gardens development in Newbury and is a significant infrastructure achievement.

Funded primarily by a grant from the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and delivered in partnership with Nelson Land Ltd, the developer of the site, this project marks a major milestone.

This will improve local air quality by reducing queuing traffic, improve access to the industrial site and has also addressed the growing need for housing by providing affordable housing for residents.



Healthy Communities



School travel

Our pilot 'School Streets' scheme in Calcot was a success and is now a permanent fixture outside the school during drop off and pick up times. In January 2024, an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera was introduced to enhance compliance with the restrictions, resulting in a 62% reduction in vehicle movements during the restricted period providing a safer area for those wishing to walk or cycle to school. Francis Bailly became our second School Streets scheme, modelled on the Calcot pilot and installed in September 2023. Following a six-month consultation period, this scheme will now be made permanent, with an ANPR camera to follow. Future schemes are being considered, including at Springfield School.

The amount of child cycle training we provide has doubled across West Berkshire and the variety of courses we offer has increased. We have an ambition to train 80% of our students and hope to welcome more instructors soon.

We have introduced a new Scooter Heroes programme for infant schools, this aims to encourage younger pupils to scoot to school. The programme includes safety, spatial awareness and pavement etiquette.

All these elements work towards our net zero target and encourages active travel from a young age.

New Active Travel Counters

Using grant funding from Active Travel England, West Berkshire Council has introduced new active travel counters.

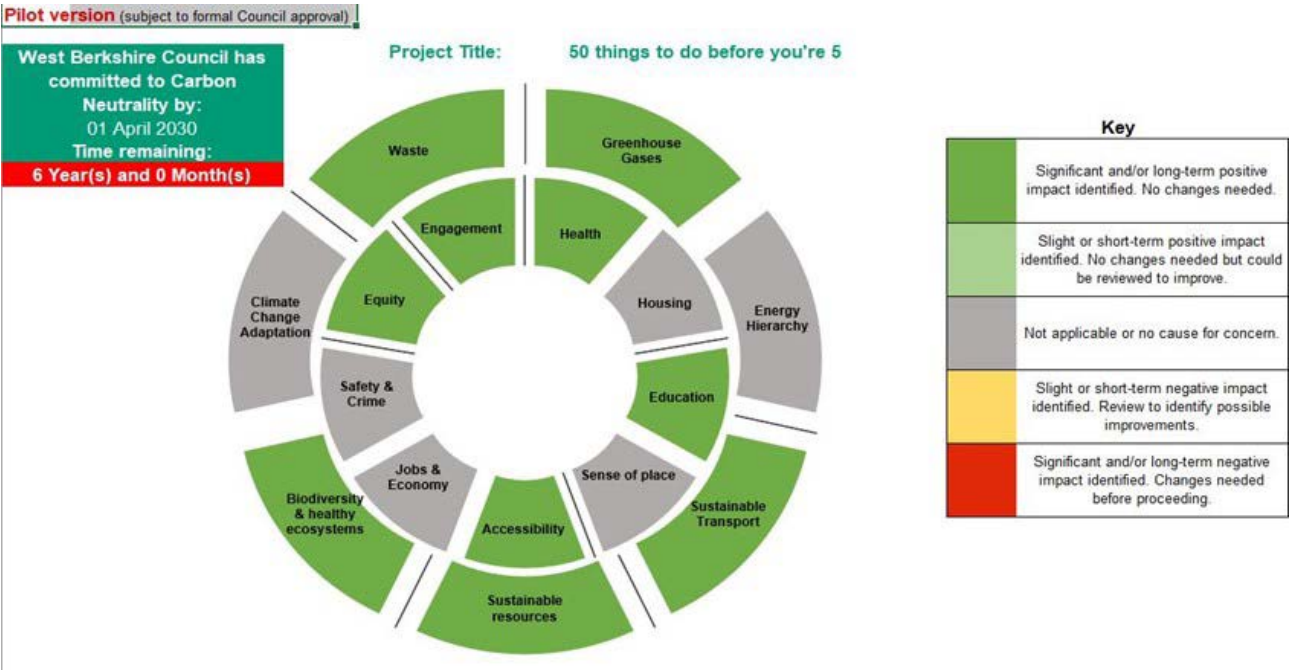
The two portable devices use radar to differentiate between and anonymously count, pedestrians and cyclists.

The anonymous count data is transmitted to a system that allows reports to be easily produced. The data will be used to inform proposals for additional or adapted active travel routes.

Encouraging and enabling active travel fits with the Council Strategy priority of tackling the climate and ecological emergency, by offering many residents an alternative for some or all of their local, shorter-distance journeys.



Resilient to Climate Change



Council introduces Sustainability Assessment Tool

In April 2024, the Council began a new pilot project to commission the use of a 'Sustainability Assessment Tool' (SAT). The tool, for internal use only, supports all five of the Council's Strategic priorities as detailed in the Council Strategy and aims to make West Berkshire greener, fairer and more prosperous with thriving communities and services we are proud of.

Whilst relevant to all the strategic priorities, the tool focuses on the priority of 'Tackling the climate and ecological emergencies' along with supporting socio-economic and health and wellbeing outcomes. Topics including biodiversity, sustainable transport and waste are covered in the SAT, along with education, safety and crime and housing.

By using the tool, Council Officers are prompted to consider the wide range of possible impacts that a proposed project, policy or event will have on environmental and socio-economic criteria. It is hoped that completing the assessment tool will highlight areas of potential cross-Council working and maximise effective use of resources and budget.

Teams from across the Council took part in the pilot, from those in Adult Social Care and colleagues delivering Early Years Services to officers working on sustainable travel and our public rights of way network.

By answering a series of set questions, Officers were able to assess the positive areas of their proposals but also areas where improvement might be possible with the help of a clear Red Amber Green (RAG) summary report provided at the end of the tool.

Example SAT shown - the existing '50 things to do before you're 5' app, commissioned by the Early Years Team.

Flood Prevention

From early January to late March 2024 West Berkshire suffered from flooding, during which time a significant number of villages across West Berkshire were affected as a result of Storms Henk, Isha, and Jocelyn. West Berkshire Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, commissioned a Section 19 Flood Investigation as a result of flooding across the region.

The majority of the flooding occurred from 5th January, at the time of Storm Henk. However, areas of West Berkshire remained

inundated for varying lengths of time, due to Storms Isha and Jocelyn encouraging further flooding. In total, approximately 210 properties experienced a form of flooding as a result of the 2024 flood event. Of these, approximately 77 properties experienced internal flooding and approximately 133 properties experienced external flooding. Flooding resulted from multiple sources, such as fluvial, groundwater, sewer, and surface water, creating a complex network of issues. An investigation into the causes, mechanisms, consequences, and responses associated with the 2024 flood event has been completed and can be seen here. This has involved discussions with local flood wardens and affected residents, site visits to the flooded locations, analysis of hydrology data, consultation with risk management authorities, and the review of data gathered by West Berkshire Council, such as questionnaires and photographic evidence.

Following the flood events the government announced a number of grants that residents

and businesses could apply for if they had been impacted by the flooding. The main criteria of the aid offered by central government is that properties must have flooded internally between 2nd and 12th January. To date £120,450.80 of grant funding has been distributed to West Berkshire residents and businesses following the flooding.

In addition to the above, the Council has continued with its programme of flood alleviation schemes around Thatcham with the completion of the North and East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Schemes and the commencement of the Memorial Fields project, which is the final project in the Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan. Once complete the plan will help protect 1200 properties in Thatcham from the effects of climate change.

Working with our Communities and Partners

Waste Reduction and Recycling

- Over the year, our Waste Minimisation Officer has engaged around 315 residents in schools and community groups across the district on the topic of reduce, reuse and recycle. Our two soil conditioner give-away events this year saw over 900 residents in attendance with 85.5 tonnes of soil conditioner given away.
- In March 2024 we supported the Great British Spring Clean initiative run by Keep Britain Tidy by lending litter pickers out to community groups across West Berkshire. We supported 8 groups in total for this event and continue to support groups throughout the year. This has included another 22 groups over the course of the year.
- In June 2024 we introduced coffee pod recycling at both of our household waste recycling centres. All the pods collected by Podback are recycled in the UK



Community Climate and Ecological Action



Adder Connections

Greenham and Crookham Commons, managed by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) on behalf of West Berkshire Council, are home to two distinct populations of adders.

Adders are an indicator species and are important within the food chain as they are both predator and prey.

After radio tracking revealed that the groups were not mixing, as they were unable to cross Old Thornford Road which divides the commons, two tunnels were created underneath the road to encourage movement.

Work Experience opportunities

The Environment Department has hosted 6 work experience students in the last year, teaching students about how we work collaboratively across the Council to deliver climate action.

With small groups of adders at risk of extinction in England, Adder Connections, a first-of-its-kind project for the UK, aims to form a larger local population to make them more resistant to potential threats such as disease. The project has received a grant from Natural England's Species Recovery Programme and will form a best-practice case study. Further radio tracking and camera traps will be employed to monitor the tunnel usage, and the results will have significant implications for similar future projects across the country.

Almond Avenue orchard

The Almond Avenue orchard has been a great success and is providing an array of fruit trees. The apple trees are thriving and provide a great source of food for our declining pollinators, as well as an abundance of fruit.



Newbury and Thatcham Repair Cafés

Newbury and Thatcham Repair Café held its first event in February 2024, with the support of donations and grants from West Berkshire Council, Thatcham Town Council and Greenham Trust.

From February 2024 through to July 2024, the Repair Café held 6 events, at monthly intervals, where volunteers repair (for free) a wide variety of broken household and garden items, and restore cherished family objects including a phonograph, several teddy bears, costume jewellery and ornaments. During that time, the remarkable and dedicated team of volunteers saved over 300 items from going to waste-processing or landfill – a total of over 700kg in weight.

The Repair Café continues to offer monthly events alternating between venues in both Newbury and Thatcham.

Newbury Community Resource Centre

The Newbury Community Resource Centre is a local charity which provides reused furniture for local people in need and offers opportunities for volunteering, work experience and training. It also helps the environment by reusing furniture and other items such as washing machines.

Between July 2023 and July 2024, they had over 144,083 customer visits and...

- Reused 77,100 household items
- 15,523 donations of furniture and household goods received
- 4,212 household collection of donated goods completed
- 3,160 deliveries of furniture to people's homes
- 3,835 electrical items tested and repaired
- 659 tonnes of furniture, appliances and other bulky items reused and recycled



Environment Advisory Group Open Forum

At the end of July 2023, the first Open Forum of the Environment Advisory Group was held. These sessions have continued approximately every 2 months and are available to watch on the Council's YouTube Channel. They provide the opportunity for exploring interesting environmental topics, hearing from experts and interest groups and learning about action happening in West

Berkshire or further afield from which we can learn and be inspired. As the name suggests, the forum is open to anyone to attend either in person or online and acts as a way in which we can engage with each other as we journey together on the road to tackling our declared climate and ecological emergencies.

Better Bus travel!

Multiple Bus service improvements have been made over the course of the year, due to the fact we were awarded funding from HM Government after the submission of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This improves connections to jobs and retail opportunities for residents and cuts the number of private cars on the road. Local Bus Operators have been supportive.



Increased Recycling

Earlier this year, WBC hired a new waste and recycling contractor called Hills Waste Solutions for our corporate sites.

As a result of the change, 19 sites have requested updates to their collections which has resulted in 25 additional food waste bins and 25 extra mixed recycling bins.

West Berkshire Wild Verges

West Berkshire Wild Verges was a collaborative project between BBOWT and West Berkshire Council that ran from March 2021 until March 2024.

The project recruited a large team of volunteers who surveyed the rural verges of West Berkshire. We wanted to get a clearer picture of the state of our verges including their potential for growing wildflowers.

With more than 1,700km of rural road verges under our stewardship, we are keen to use them to make space for nature, boost biodiversity and help connect fragmented habitats.

Therefore, we'll be using the information gathered to help explore opportunities and ways in which we can manage these verges more effectively.

4. Update on the Council's carbon footprint

- 4.1 After the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, the Council worked on establishing a baseline for its own carbon footprint. This was reported for the period April 2019 – March 2020. A specialist contractor assisted in quantifying the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated by the Council's assets and activities.
- 4.2 For the purposes of this report, we have defined the Council's operational control as a boundary to isolate our carbon emissions, therefore, if the Council has control of an asset, it has been included within our calculations.
- 4.3 Those GHG emissions that extend beyond our control are categorised in different scopes. The three scopes when considering emissions are as follows:
- **Scope 1 emissions** (aka direct) come from sources that are owned or controlled by the Council e.g. our vehicles
 - **Scope 2 emissions** (aka indirect) come from the generation of electricity/ heat etc. used in our buildings (for example, from the national grid)
 - **Scope 3 emissions** (aka indirect) come from goods/ services that the Council utilises but are not directly responsible for, e.g. investments, activities of our contractors
- 4.4 It is mandatory to report on Scope 1 and 2 emissions with Scope 3 emissions being optional. We have included the Scope 3 emissions from our largest contracts (waste (Veolia), highways (Volker Highways) and our Leisure Centre operator (Everyone Active for reporting year).

- 4.5 As indicated above, West Berkshire Council's carbon reporting cycle aligns with the financial year, i.e., 1st April to 31st March, annually. Therefore, activity data within the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024 has been used to update the carbon footprint and to compare against the baseline data.
- 4.6 Using the data available, the Council's carbon emissions (or carbon footprint) are calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Activity Data} \times \text{Emissions Factor} = \text{Emissions (tCO}_2\text{e)}$$

The emission factors are the amount of GHG emissions associated with the activity data (e.g. the emissions from the combustion of a litre of diesel). tCO₂e stands for tonnes of CO₂ equivalent and is a metric measure that is used to compare emissions from various greenhouse gases on the basis of their Global Warming Potential (GWP) by converting amounts of other gases to the equivalent amount of CO₂³.

³ <https://coolerfuture.com/en/blog/co2e>

Table 1: West Berkshire Council's Carbon Footprint 2023/24 compared to baseline (2019/20)

Emissions Scope	Emissions Source	2019/20 (Baseline)		2023/24		difference CO ₂ e (tonnes) between baseline and 23/24	% difference between baseline and 23/24
		CO ₂ e (tonnes)	% of total emissions	CO ₂ e (tonnes)	% of total emissions		
1	Stationary Combustion (e.g. energy use)	3,502.3	30.1%	2953.1	32.7%	-549.2	-15.7%
	Mobile Combustion (e.g. vehicles)	290.6	2.5%	218.4	2.4%	-72.2	-24.8%
	Sewage Processing and Refrigerants	146.0	1.3%	124.2	1.4%	-21.8	-14.9%
	Total Scope 1	3,939.0	33.9%	3295.8	36.5%	-643.23	-16.3%
2	Purchased electricity	3,495.8	30.1%	2,529.4	28%	-966.5	-27.7%
	Total Scope 2	3,495.8	30.1%	2,529.4	28%	-966.5	-27.7%
3	Contractor Emissions	2,574.7	22.2%	2,010.23	22.3%	-564.5	-21.9%
	Leisure Centres	1,228.9	10.6%	865.54	9.6%	-363.4	-29.6%
	Business Travel	381.2	3.3%	325.0	3.6%	-56.2	-14.8%
	Total Scope 3	4,184.8	36.0%	3,200.7	35.5%	-984.1	-23.5%
	All Scopes	11,619.6	100.0%	9,025.9	100.0%	-2593.7	-22.3%

4.7 Table 1 shows the data for the 2019/20 baseline and the latest data for 2023/24. The percentage differences between these two positions are shown in the last column in the table. The overall position is that the latest 2023/24 figures show a 22% reduction in emissions from the baseline.

4.8 The year-on-year changes from the baseline through to 2023/24 are set out in the full data table in Appendix B. Figure 2 below shows a summary of the total emissions for each of the years from the baseline to current position.

Figure 2: West Berkshire Carbon Emissions 2019/20 – 2023/24

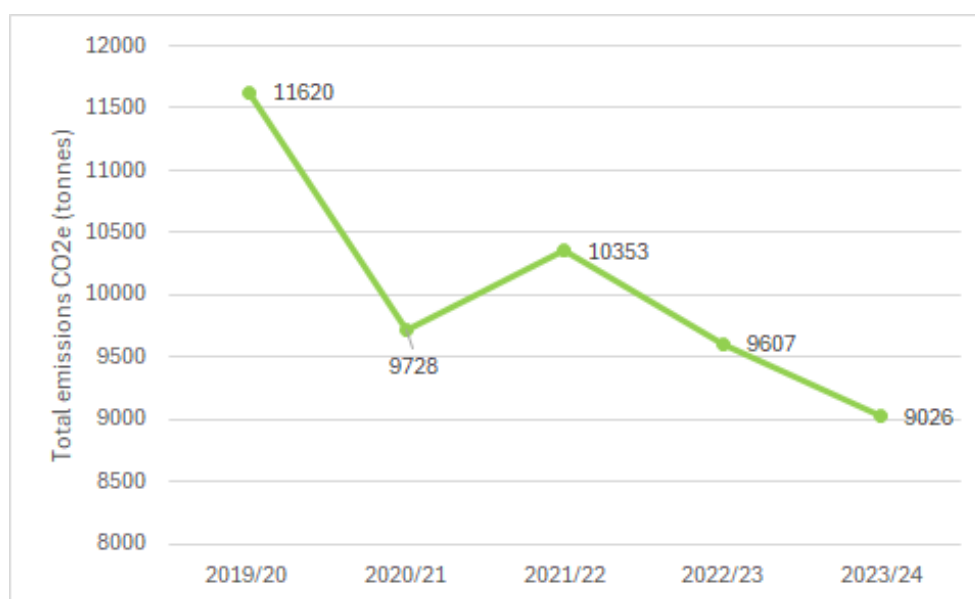
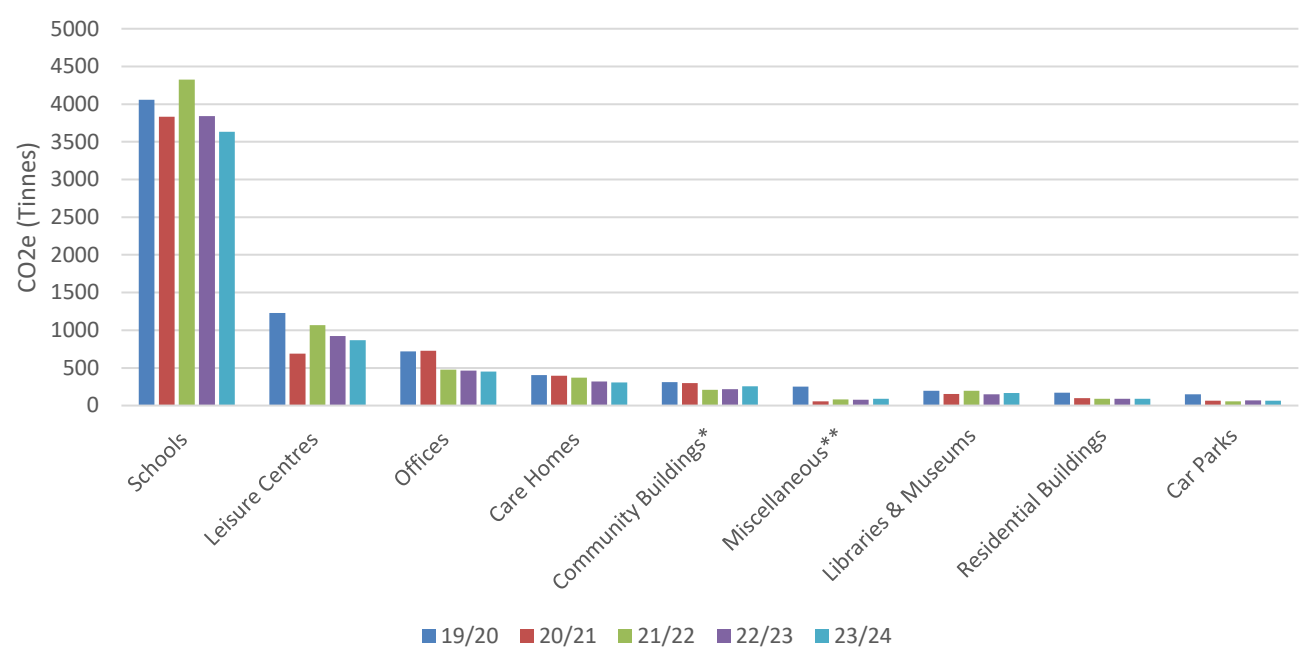


Figure 3: Council emissions by asset type 2019/20 – 2023/24



4.9 As we described in our first annual report, the impact of the covid-19 pandemic was clearly seen in our carbon footprint figures for 2020/21. The initial significant reduction from the baseline was impacted by a number of council activities being ‘paused’ and the operation of buildings being affected by the national lockdown. As expected, once lockdown restrictions were lifted, many activities re-commenced and the 2021/22 emissions reflect this increase in activity. However, the emission levels did not get close to pre-covid levels and there remained a good reduction compared to the baseline. The graph shows that this year (2023/24), like last year, the Council’s emissions have reduced to below the levels impacted by the covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, highlighting that the Council’s emissions are reducing based on action it is taking. Since reporting began in 2019/20, the Council has reduced its emissions by 22% overall. It is anticipated they will continue to progress on this path as new projects

and actions are brought forward.

4.10 The Council owns a significant number of buildings and other assets that all contribute to the organisation’s carbon footprint. Figure 3 shows the changes in emissions in relation to the Council’s assets reported by asset type. The significant collective impact that the schools in West Berkshire have on our carbon footprint should not be underestimated. However schools have seen a reduction from last year and are now having less impact than was recorded in the covid-impacted period. This is owing to factors such as a reduction in usage as a result of behaviour change and energy efficiency and renewable technology improvements. This is why we are keen to embark on projects that tackle energy efficiency in schools and the delivery of renewable energy. Leisure centres are the next highest emitters, followed by Offices and care homes.

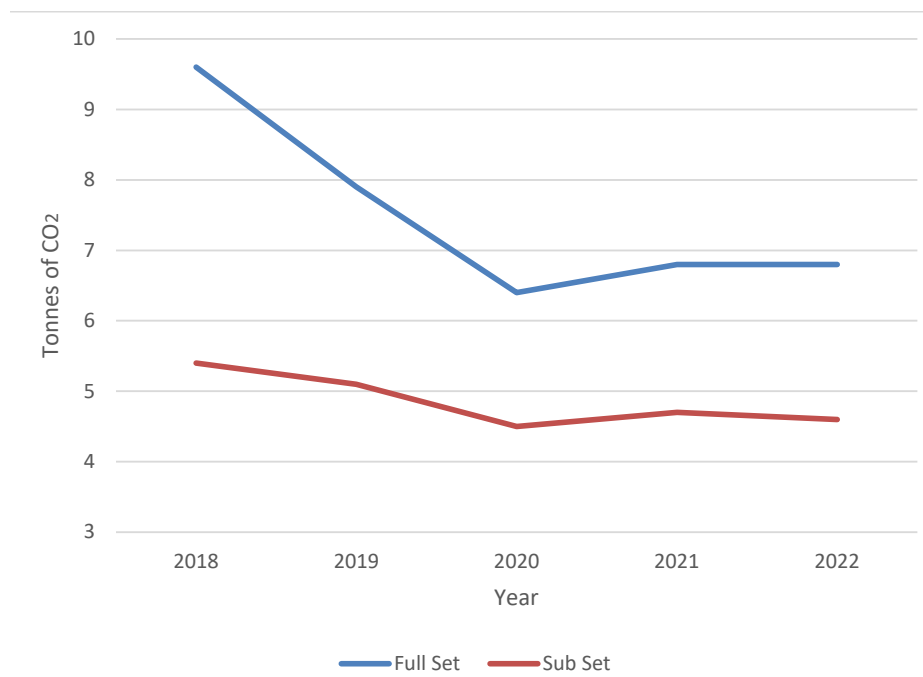
5. Update on the District's emissions

- 5.1 The carbon emissions for the District as a geographical area are reported using data published by the Government. Each year the Government provides data at local authority level which is 'per capita carbon dioxide emissions in tonnes'.
- 5.2 Two sets of data are produced – a 'full set' and a 'sub set'. Both sets of data report on the overall emissions from the following activities: transport, industry & commercial, domestic and agriculture. The 'sub set', however, removes data over which the local authority has no control. For example, in relation to transport, this would remove the travel associated with the strategic road network (M4 and A34) as these roads are managed by National Highways and not the Local Highway Authority.
- 5.3 There is a 2 year period between when the emissions occur and when they are confirmed and reported by the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero. Data is reported for each calendar year. The latest year for reporting is 2022. These figures are included in Table 2 and Figure 4 along with previous years since we started reporting in our Environment Strategy and Annual Progress Reports.
- 5.4 When the 2020 figures were reported, it was highlighted that these reflected the dramatic changes in behaviour that the Covid19 pandemic and associated lockdown periods had caused. The 2022 figures show a similar pattern to the 2021 figures when lockdown restrictions were lifted and new patterns of behaviour were created leading to an increase in emissions. The emissions in 2022 broadly remain the same as 2021 with a small decrease in the subset figures. The recent projects and carbon reduction activities being delivered in and by our communities will feed into more recent years for which data is not yet published
- 5.5 Continuous action is needed across the District to reduce emissions and the Council recognises its role in encouraging and influencing communities, businesses and residents as well as ensuring the policies and plans it sets align with carbon reduction aims. Actions within the Delivery Plan highlight the need to work with businesses, local communities and landowners and farmers to help all those who live and work in West Berkshire to have a positive impact and help to address the climate and ecological emergencies. Policies within the adopted and emerging Local Plans also have an important role to play in carbon reduction across the District.

Table 2: Full Set and Sub Set Per Capita Carbon Dioxide emissions (tonnes) for West Berkshire

	Full Set	Sub Set
2018	9.6	5.4
2019	7.9	5.1
2020	6.4	4.5
2021	6.8	4.7
2022	6.8	4.6

Figure 3: Full Set and Sub-Set per capita carbon dioxide emissions (tonnes) for West Berkshire



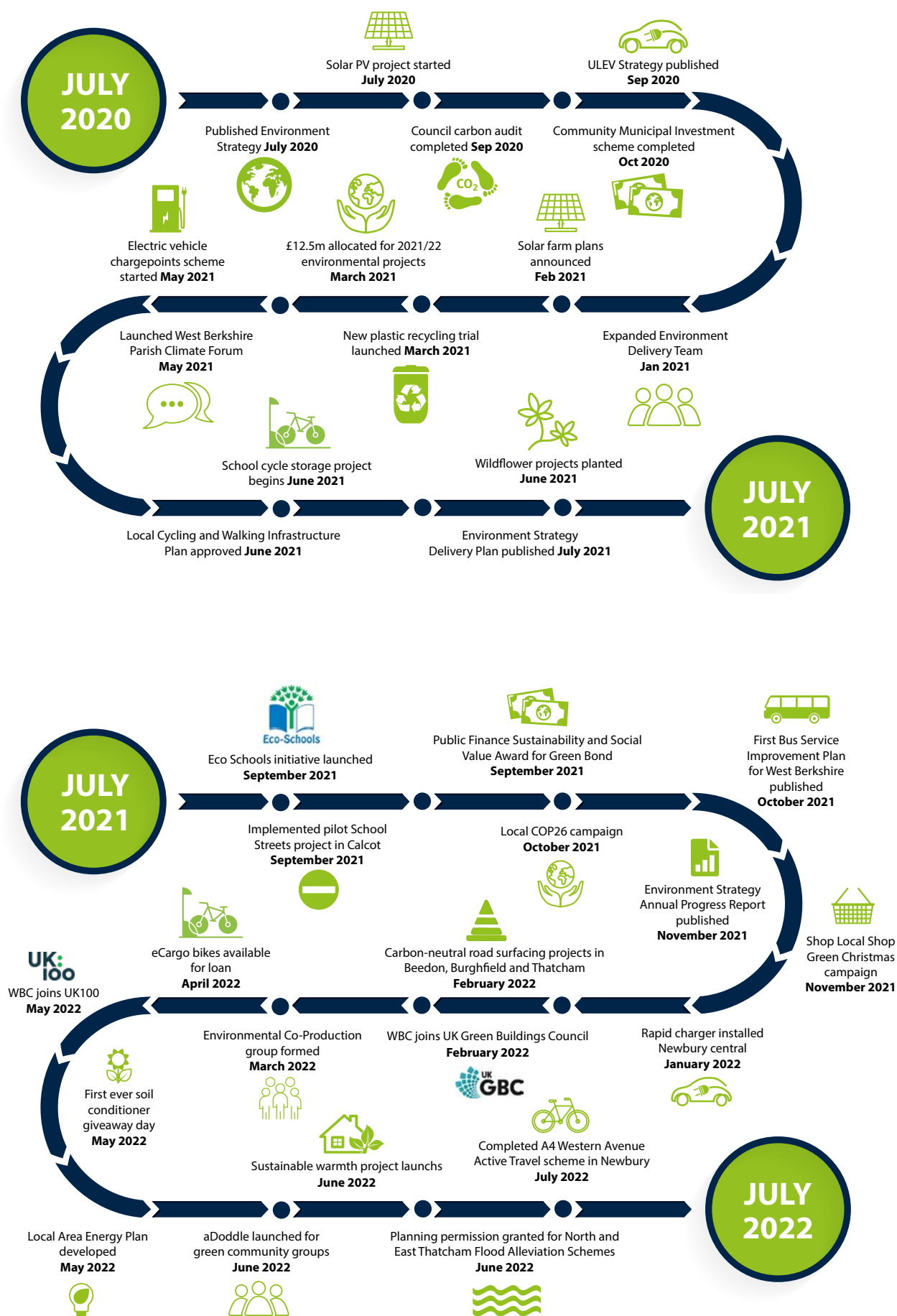
5.6 It is recognised that there is a huge amount to be achieved but with collective action progress can be made. The challenge is to press ahead with greater working together and innovative ideas to deliver a more sustainable future across the District.

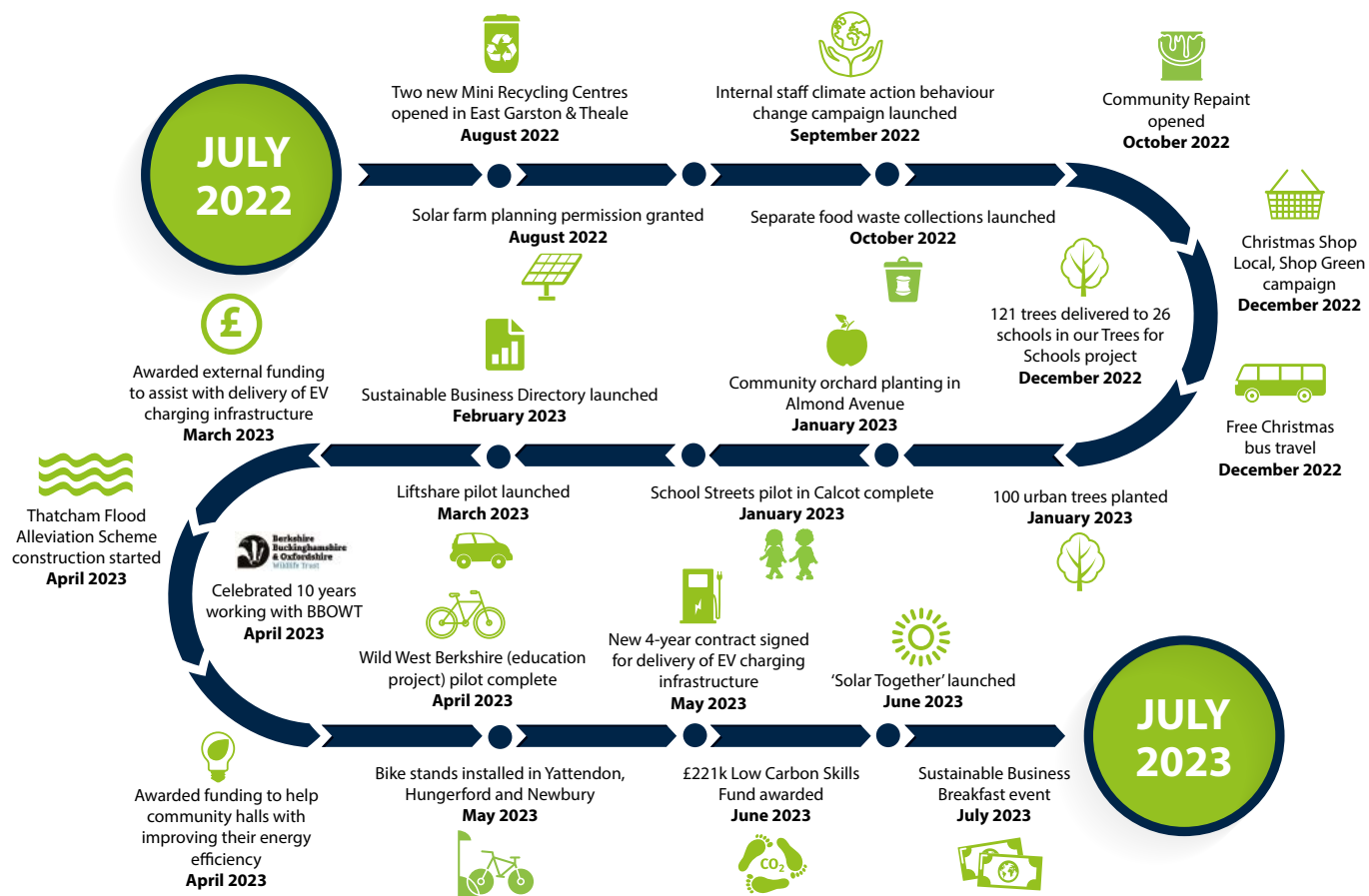


6. Conclusion and looking ahead

- 6.1 This fourth year of delivering our Environment Strategy has been another busy one. Activities have been varied with project delivery, establishment of new ideas and processes, bidding for external funding and background planning work for large projects to be launched in future years.
- 6.2 We have sought to engage with businesses, Parish and Town Councils, community groups and landowners. We aim to share all we know so that there is easy access to any projects, funding or initiatives that will benefit members of the West Berkshire community. This is key as we all work together and journey on the pathway to net zero.
- 6.3 There is a wealth of great 'climate action' happening across the district with many organisations leading by example. We have been pleased to add the Environment Advisory Group Open Forum to the ways in which we can engage, share information and facilitate discussion. We also try and share relevant news to inspire and encourage others through our Environment Newsletter published each month and our Blogs. Let us know if you have anything to share via these publications.
- 6.4 We have spent some time looking back at the past year and hope that some of the projects and community delivery you have read about will inspire you. As we look forward and reach the half way mark of 2025, we will look to refresh the Environment Strategy. This will aim to be more focused, have a streamlined Delivery Plan and add detail to our pathway to net zero plans.

Appendix A - Roadmaps





Appendix B – Full Carbon Footprint Data Table

The table below shows the annual emissions data for West Berkshire Council's activities (Scope 1, 2 and 3). It covers the period from 2019/20 (baseline year) through to 2023/24. Figure 2 in section 4.8 of the main report represents the total emissions data from this table in a graph.

Emissions Scope	Emissions Source	2019/20 (Baseline)		2020/2021		2021/2022		2022/2023		2023/2024	
		CO ₂ e (tonnes)	% of total emissions	CO ₂ e (tonnes)	% of total emissions	CO ₂ e (tonnes)	% of total emissions	CO ₂ e (tonnes)	% of total emissions	CO ₂ e (tonnes)	% of total emissions
1	Stationary Combustion (e.g. energy use)	3,502.34	30.1%	3,219.1	33.1%	3,586.2	34.6%	3,164.79	32.2%	2953.1	32.7%
	Mobile Combustion (e.g. vehicles)	**290.64	2.5%	353.9	3.6%	552.9	5.3%	232.73	2.4%	218.4	2.4%
	Sewage Processing	38.33	0.3%	38.3	0.4%	15.7	0.2%	15.68	0.2%	124.2	1.4%
	Refrigerants	107.71	0.9%	81.9	0.8%	121.2	1.2%	108.61	1.1%		
	Total Scope 1	3,939.01	33.9%	3,693.1	38.0%	4,276.1	41.3%	3,521.80	35.8%	3295.8	36.5%
2	Purchased electricity	3,495.76	30.1%	2,946.6	30.3%	2,643.4	25.5%	2,475.21	29.4%	2,529.4	28%
	Total Scope 2	3,495.76	30.1%	2,946.6	30.3%	2,643.4	25.5%	2,475.21	29.4%	2,529.4	28%
3	Contractor Emissions	2,574.72	22.2%	2,397.0	24.6%	2,359.3	22.8%	2,537.77	25.8%	2,010.23	22.3%
	Leisure Centres	1,228.93	10.6%	691.3	7.1%	1,066.3	10.3%	938.34	9.5%	865.54	9.6%
	Business Travel	**381.17	3.3%	0.3	0.0%	8.4	0.1%	364.56	3.7%	325.0	3.6%
	Total Scope 3	4,184.82	36.0%	3,088.6	31.7%	3,433.9	33.2%	3,840.67	39.0%	3,200.7	35.5%
	All Scopes	11619.588	100.0%	9,728.2	100.0%	10,353.4	100.0%	9,837.68	100.0%	9,025.9	100.0%

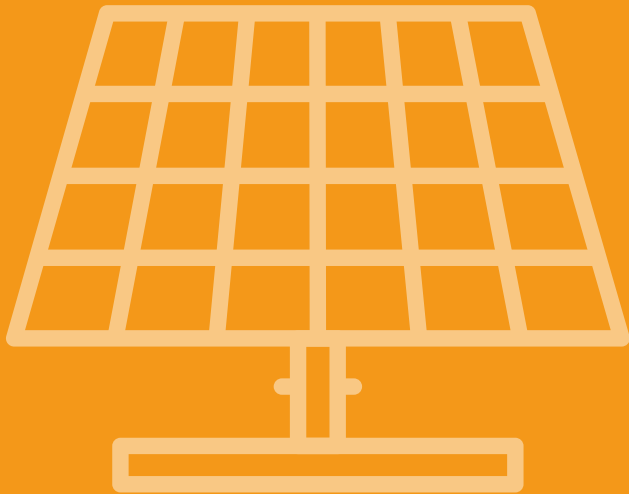
Appendix C – Glossary

This glossary provides an explanation of terms used in this annual report along with some additional terms which may also be of general interest relating to climate change and our environment.

Abbreviation	Term	Explanation
	Anaerobic Digestion	A process in which organic matter is broken down by micro-organisms in an oxygen free 'tank' to produce fuels.
	Baseline	A fixed point of reference used as a starting point for comparison purposes.
	Biodiversity	The variety of plant and animal life.
	Carbon budget	The maximum amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted over a certain period.
CCS	Carbon capture and storage	Trapping carbon at its emission source, and then storing it long term.
CO2e	Carbon Dioxide Equivalent	A term used to describe different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any greenhouse gases and their amount, it is the amount of carbon dioxide which would have the equivalent warming impact.
	Carbon footprint/carbon audit	The total greenhouse gas emissions caused by a person/ event/organisation/product, expressed as the carbon dioxide equivalent.
	Carbon neutral/ carbon neutrality	Balancing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by offsetting, or removing from the atmosphere, an equivalent amount of carbon for the amount produced.
	Climate change	The long-term shift in the planets weather patterns and temperatures.
CCA	Climate Change Act 2008	Provides the framework for the UK's climate change policy
	Climate Change Bonds	Fixed income bonds, linked to climate change solutions.
	Climate Emergency Declaration	The Declarations vary for each organisation. The Council's Declaration is set out in the Introduction section of the Environment Strategy.
	CO2 emissions within the scope of influence of Local Authorities	The UK produces a breakdown of carbon dioxide emissions by Local Authority area as a subset of its annual inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. The emissions deemed to be within the scope of Local Authorities exclude large industrial sites, railways, motorways and land-use.
CCC	Committee on Climate Change	Independent body to advise the government on climate change.
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy	A charge which can be levied on new developments within the Local Authority's area. It helps deliver required infrastructure.
	Delivery Plan	The Council's plan on how the objectives of the Environment Strategy will be achieved.
	Economic Development Board	Newly formed Economic Board which will oversee the Economic Development Strategy, implementing an action plan to fulfil its objectives.

EU ETS	European Union Emissions Trading System	The first and largest greenhouse gas emissions trading system in the world. It works on a 'cap and trade' principle where allowances are set. Allowances are auctioned off or allocated for free. Emitters must ensure they have enough allowances to meet their emissions or purchase more. Those who reduce their emissions and have spare allowances can sell off their credits.
GWP	Global Warming Potential	The potential of a Greenhouse Gas to trap additional heat in the atmosphere relative to Carbon dioxide. Specifically, it is a measure of how much energy the emissions of 1 tonne of a gas will absorb over a given period of time, relative to the emissions of 1 tonne of carbon dioxide. The larger the GWP, the more that gas warms the Earth compared to CO2 over that time period.
	Green energy	Definitions would usually mean the gas or electricity were from 100% renewable sources.
GHG	Greenhouse gases	Gases in the atmosphere that absorb and re-emit heat. They occur naturally in the Earth's atmosphere but human activity increases these, leading to increased warming and climate change.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	The total monetary/market value of the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.
	Health and Wellbeing Board	A partnership that brings together West Berkshire's leaders of the health and social care system.
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators	A measurable value/outcome to gauge how well an organisation is meeting its key objectives.
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry	A greenhouse gas sector defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Programme	Sets out the Council's long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks
	Local Plan	The plan is part of the overall Development Plan for West Berkshire, setting out our local planning policies.
LTP	Local Transport Plan	Aims to deliver effective transport solutions for all by increasing choice and minimising congestion.
NAEI	National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory	The Inventory is compiled by Ricardo. It is the standard reference inventory for the UK and includes emission estimates for a wide range of important pollutants.
	Nature Recovery Plan	The plan defines the objectives and key actions required to improve biodiversity and wildlife in the district
	Net zero / Net zero carbon	Making changes to reduce carbon or GHG emissions to the lowest amount – and offsetting as a last resort to reach an overall net position of zero carbon.
	North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously AONB)	Area of countryside designated for conservation in recognition of its national importance.
	Per capita	The district's emissions divided by the number of people to give a value per person. This can be useful in comparing other areas of differing population size.

	Operational Control	A method of providing a boundary for an organisation to isolate its carbon emissions. This method describes where an organisation has functional operational control of an asset it will be included in calculations.
	Scope 1 Emissions	aka direct emissions, come from sources that are owned or controlled by an organisation, e.g. vehicles
	Scope 2 Emissions	(aka Energy indirect) come from the consumption of electricity used in an organisation's buildings
	Scope 3 Emissions	(aka other indirect) emissions come from goods/ services that an organisation utilise but are not directly responsible for e.g. investments.
SME	Small medium enterprises	Small or medium businesses are generally defined as businesses with less than 250 employees.
SuDs	Sustainable drainage systems	Systems designed to manage the drainage of surface water.
	Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership	An organisation bringing together business, public sector, education and community together to drive the local economy.
	Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum	A Forum to help prepare, respond and recover from emergency incidents.
	The National Adaptation Programme	This sets out the actions that the UK government and others will take over the next five-yearly cycle to adapt to the challenged of climate change.
ULEV	Ultra low emission vehicle	A vehicle that emits no more than 75g/km CO ₂ , based on the NEDC test, at the tailpipe. This includes pure electric, hydrogen, range-extender and plug in hybrid vehicles.
	Whole life carbon	The emissions created for every stage of an item/ buildings production, use and disposal.



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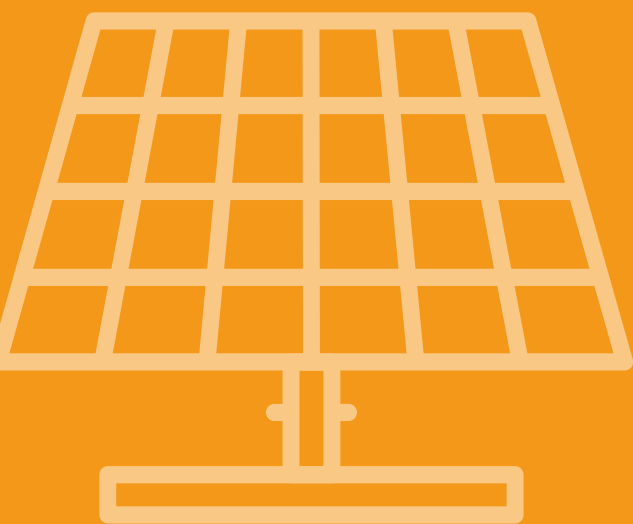
Appendix D

Environment Strategy 2025 Refresh

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Environment Strategy

2025 Refresh



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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Foreword

Tackling the climate and ecological emergencies is one of the defining challenges of our time. At West Berkshire Council, we recognise the urgency and the responsibility we share to act decisively and collaboratively. This refreshed Environment Strategy marks the next step in our challenging journey—a renewed commitment, grounded in action, ambition, and accountability.

Since the launch of our original strategy in July 2020, we have made meaningful progress. But the scale of the challenge demands more. This updated strategy reflects the lessons we've learned, the evolving best practices, and the growing momentum in our organisation and across our communities. It sets out the projects we are planning which will reduce our emissions and help us on our pathway to net zero. You will also read about the key themes that will guide our Delivery Plan—focusing our efforts where they can have the greatest impact.

Whilst the responsibility for achieving the Council's pathway to net zero by 2030 lies firmly with us, there is a greater challenge of influencing and assisting in the District's journey to net zero. For this, our approach

is rooted in partnership. We know it is not something the Council can achieve alone. It requires the collective effort of residents, businesses, community groups, and regional partners. Together, we can build a greener, fairer, and more resilient West Berkshire.

Whilst much of our focus will be achieving net zero for the Council's activities, I hope this Strategy Refresh will inspire communities, businesses and other organisations to have the same focus as we strive to include environmental sustainability at the heart of everything we do. We invite you to join us in making that vision a reality.



Councillor Stuart Gourley
Executive Member for Environment
and Highways

1. Introduction

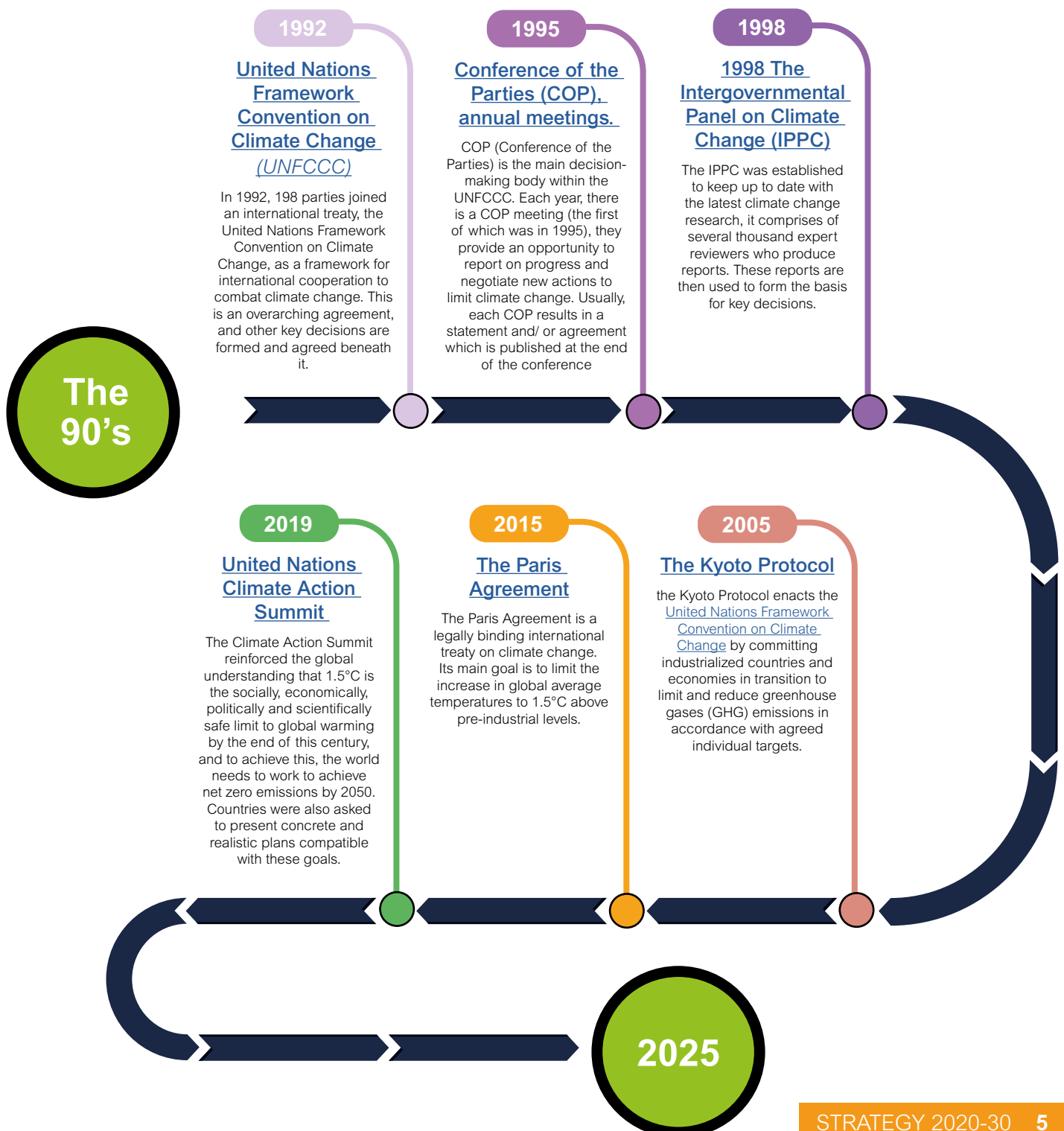
- 1.1 The climate emergency is one of the largest challenges we face. In 2023 concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions reached a record high and summer 2024 was the hottest summer on record globally. There are actions we can take both individually and as organisations to help mitigate the multitude of impacts, but we must act now.
- 1.2 On 2nd July 2019, West Berkshire Council declared a climate emergency. Subsequently, we developed and published a comprehensive and ambitious Environment Strategy (in 2020) which set out our intentions for achieving net zero by 2030.
- 1.3 To support the objectives of the Environment Strategy, we produced a detailed Environment Strategy Delivery plan which states the actions, responsibilities and timescales required to achieve the intentions within the Environment Strategy.
- 1.4 A great deal has changed in the past 5 years. This has included the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, a change in the Council's administration and a change in national government. A new 'Climate Change Service' was created within the Environment Department in April 2023 to help direct, deliver and focus work on climate action. We've learnt from our experience, reflected on our existing approach, and considered new ideas, research and policy to develop a refreshed strategy to achieve our objectives.
- 1.5 We've updated some of our terminology. Our target now states we want to achieve net zero emissions for council activities by 2030, as opposed to being carbon neutral by 2030. The reason for this is because net zero incorporates all greenhouse gas emissions, not just carbon dioxide. In addition, net zero aims to first significantly reduce emissions to as low as can be achieved, and then offset any remaining emissions, which is the council's intention. This aligns us with the approach of Government and other Local Authorities.
- 1.6 We also declared an ecological emergency on 5th October 2023; this means we have recognised the urgency to protect nature and will take collective action to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity locally. The UK has experienced an 19% decrease in wildlife abundance on average since the 1970s and ranks among the bottom 10% globally for biodiversity. Habitats that have rich biodiversity support our ability to address wider climate change challenges, making it vital that we address this issue.
- 1.7 As part of our review of the Environment Strategy, we have identified a need to rationalise and prioritise our actions to have the largest impact and make use of the limited time and resources available to achieve our target. Actions that are no longer viable are not being pursued and existing actions have become more focused.
- 1.8 West Berkshire Council remains committed to assisting the district to reduce its emissions, however there are elements which are outside of our direct control and scope of influence. We recognise that the behavioural change of our residents, businesses and schools can be influenced and supported, but outcomes are not within our direct control. We will continue to support the wider community, where practicable, by providing high quality information and advice in order for the District to strive towards a net-zero target. However, our main projects going forward will be focused on our own operations and our pathway to net zero.
- 1.9 We remain dedicated to continuous improvement and keeping up to date with new developments and technologies in the sector and will support projects across the District where practicable and that fall in line with the Council Strategy and Development Management Policies.

2. Context

2.1 The global and national context within which we operate is important and frames our planning and ambitions when it comes to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Figure 1 below sets out some key global milestones over the last 33 years that inform and influence our actions today.

2.2 Appendix A includes further information on legislation, documents and strategies that relate to the national context and how these are relevant for the themes explored in more detail in section 4 of this document.

Figure 1: Global environmental milestones

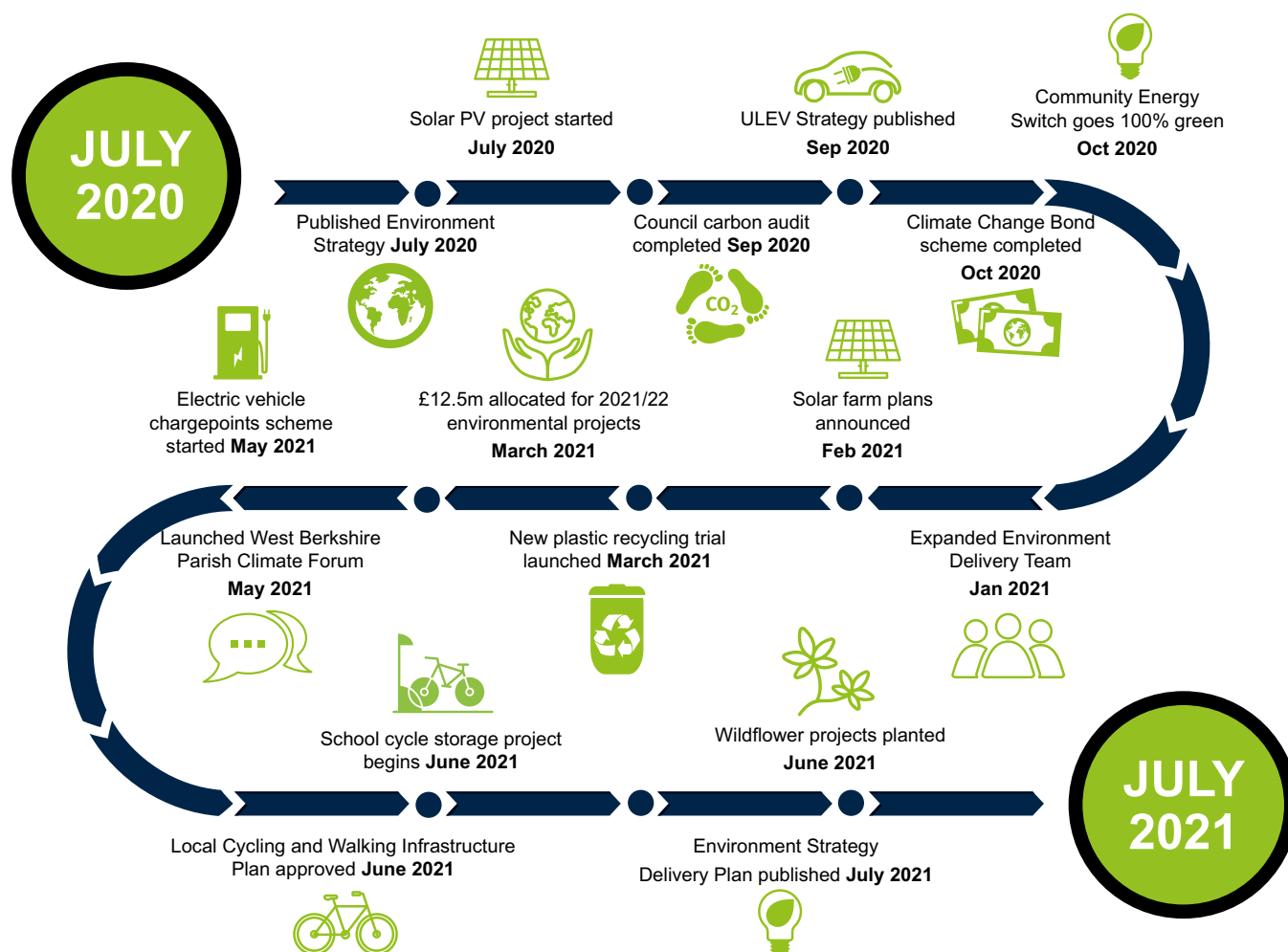


3. Achievements to date

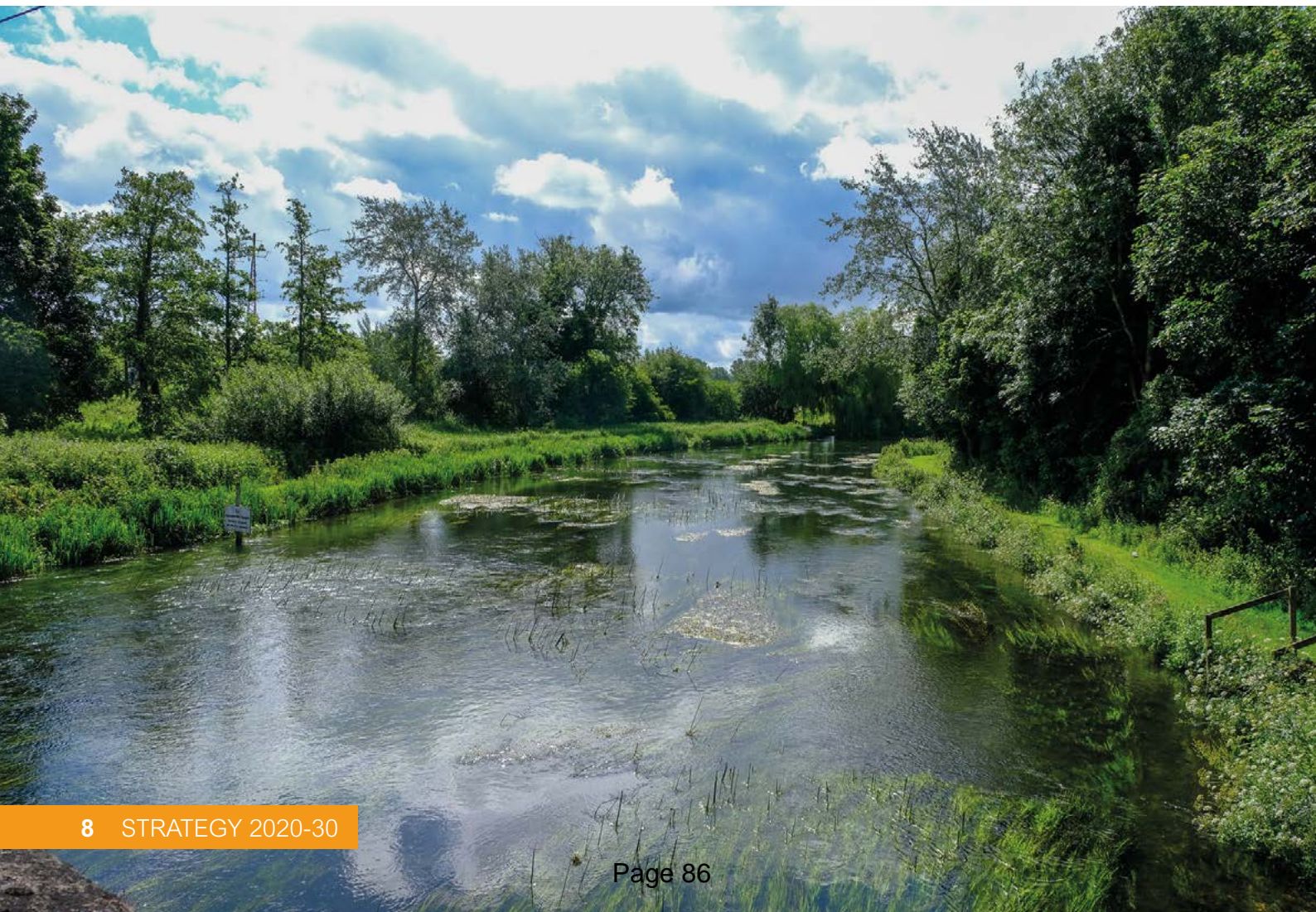
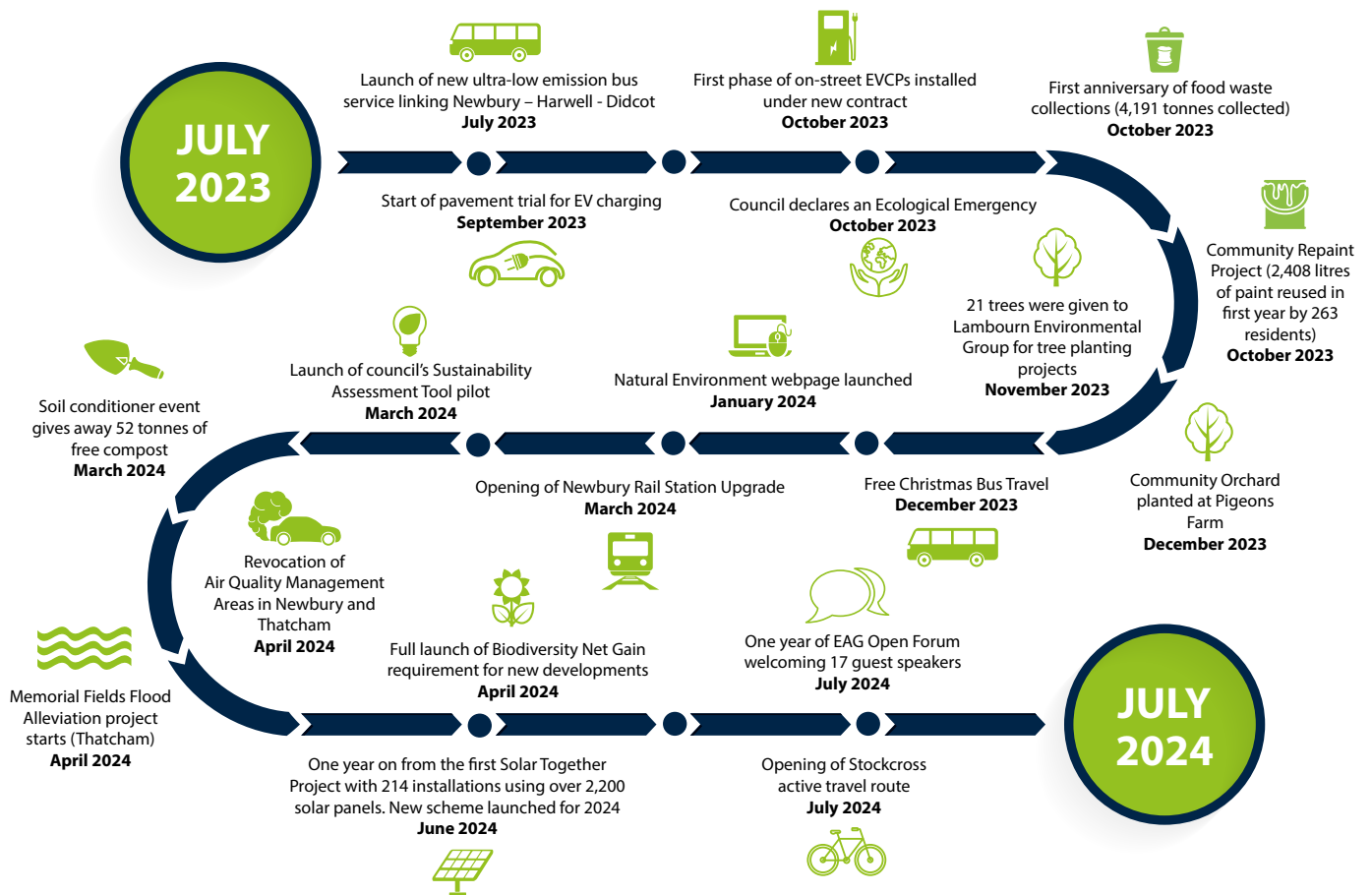
3.1 Following the publication of the original Environment Strategy in July 2020, Progress Reports have been produced annually. These have been reported to the Executive and are published on the [Council's Environment Strategy webpage](#). They report on progress in reducing the Council's carbon footprint and include many case studies of projects delivered by the Council and the community which demonstrate a wide range of climate action.

3.2 Included in the Annual Progress Reports each year is a roadmap of the highlights which acts a summary of the key projects and achievements of the year. These published roadmaps from July 2020 through to July 2024 are included below to provide an overview of the achievements to date.

Figure 2: Highlights of achievements to date – 'roadmaps' from July 2020 to July 2024







4. Themes for delivery

- 4.1 As part of our revised approach through the refreshing of a strategy, we have categorised our work into 4 main themes:
- Energy Efficiency and Renewables
 - Sustainable Transport
 - The Natural Environment
 - Waste Reduction & Recycling
- 4.2 These themes cover all the projects we are delivering and plan to deliver soon, which will contribute to our pathway to net zero (see more about our pathway in section 6). The themes form the structure for our re-focused Delivery Plan.
- 4.3 Within the re-focused and refreshed [Environment Strategy Delivery Plan](#), there are overarching actions with specific tasks to contribute to achieving each theme. In addition, there are details of responsibilities, estimated timescales, estimated carbon savings (measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent or tCO₂e where possible), estimated cost and whether the action will provide carbon savings for West Berkshire Council, the District, or both.
- 4.4 The Energy Efficiency and Renewables theme includes actions which will progress working with partners, the decarbonisation of the Council's estate and activities, generate renewable energy and support the wider community to become more energy efficient.
- 4.5 The Sustainable Transport theme contains actions which support active and sustainable travel throughout the district, including developing cycle hubs, increasing the amount of electric vehicle charge points, and encouraging our staff to travel sustainably.
- 4.6 The Natural Environment theme focuses on the development and implementation of a strategic approach to the creation of natural capital across the District as well as working with partners, to conserve and enhance habitat and continue to develop and implement best practice methods for environmental land and water management. This is a key theme in addressing the ecological emergency and fulfilling our duties set out in the Environment Act.



- 4.7 The Waste Reduction and Recycling theme incorporates actions to continue to develop methods to reduce municipal waste and increase recycling rates as well as increase recycling rates within Council offices.
- 4.8 In addition to these main four themes, we have identified common threads which run through all our work, the most relevant of which is net zero as it will assist us in addressing the climate and ecological emergencies declared by the Council. Other common threads include Health and Wellbeing, Communications, Partnerships and Education & Engagement, all of which also support the threads within the Council Strategy.
- 4.9 Many actions under the four themes of the Delivery Plan will have a positive impact on the common thread of Health and Wellbeing. Whether this is through reduced emissions from transport creating cleaner air, or enhancement of and greater access to nature, or encouraging active travel, we aim to improve health and wellbeing of all residents via our activities and guard against any detrimental impacts. This supports the Council's commitment to a 'health in all policies' approach across the organisation.
- 4.10 The Council will seek to communicate effectively and in a variety of ways to ensure residents, communities, organisations and businesses are aware of our plans and proposals and have an opportunity to comment where appropriate. The importance of communicating our and others' successes is recognised as an important way of providing ideas and encouraging the community of West Berkshire to take a proactive approach. We will also seek to learn from and engage with others in the District and further afield who have developed innovative projects in an attempt to improve our projects and plans.
- 4.11 West Berkshire Council seeks to work in partnership wherever possible, particularly where this will strengthen outcomes, make the best use of resources and support, build and encourage community action. Existing partnership working has delivered some excellent outcomes and opportunities for new partnerships are encouraged.
- 4.12 Providing information to help increase knowledge on climate, biodiversity and sustainability matters across the themes is important to enable and encourage understanding, leading to action and behavioural change. Opportunities for engagement to support this education and joint learning are built into the Council's work alongside a desire to take up new opportunities for engagement where they deliver on important objectives and priorities.

5. Measuring and reporting progress

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>5.1 After the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, the Council worked on establishing a baseline for its own carbon footprint. This was reported for the period April 2019 – March 2020. A specialist contractor assisted in quantifying the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated by the Council's assets and activities.</p> | <p>5.2 Each year, we report on the carbon emissions for our own operations and assets and compare it to the baseline figure. We measure our energy use, travel, sewage processing and refrigerants, as well as emissions from our main contractors.</p> <p>5.3 To do this, we use a recognised and trusted methodology known as the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. We use the following formula to calculate emissions:</p> |
|---|---|

$$\text{Activity Data} \times \text{Emissions Factor} = \text{Emissions (tCO}_2\text{e)}$$

The three scopes when considering emissions are as follows:

- **Scope 1 emissions** (aka direct) come from sources that are owned or controlled by the Council e.g. our vehicles,
- **Scope 2 emissions** (aka indirect) come from the generation of electricity/ heat etc. used in our buildings (for example, from the national grid)
- **Scope 3 emissions** (aka indirect) come from goods/ services that the Council utilises but are not directly responsible for, e.g. investments, activities of our contractors

Activity data is data associated with West Berkshire Council's activities (e.g. diesel consumption in litres).

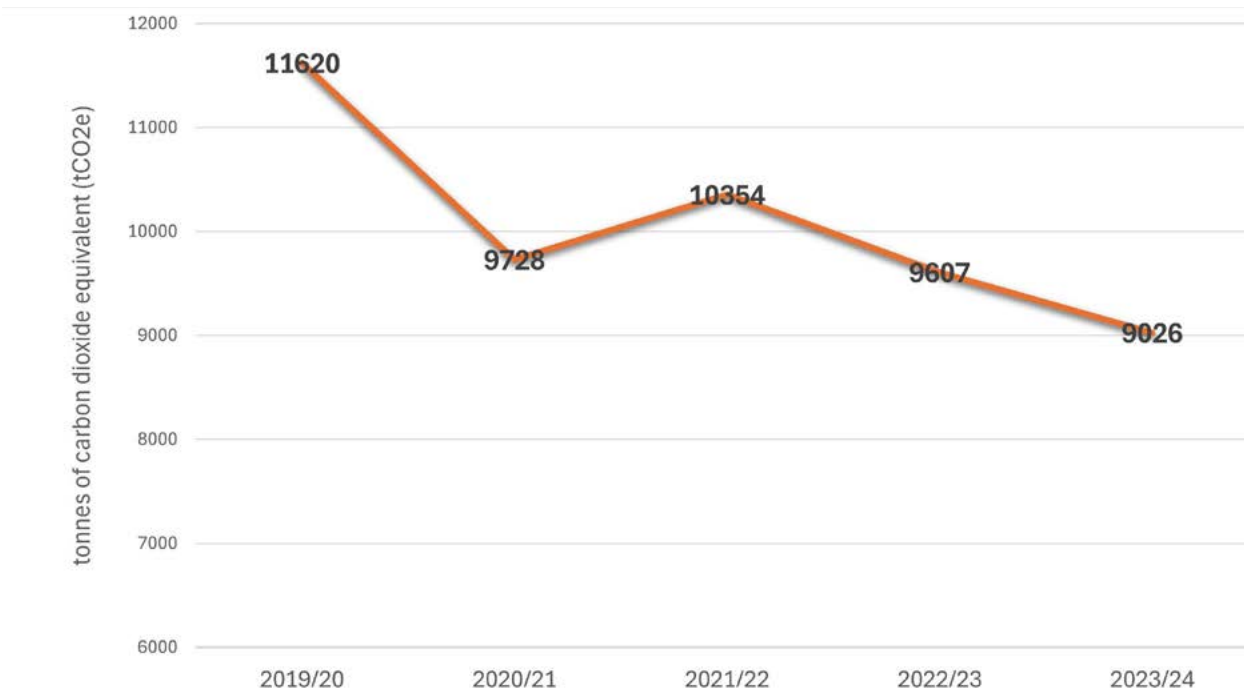
The emission factors are the amount of GHG emissions associated with the activity data (e.g. the emissions from the combustion of a litre of diesel).

tCO₂e stands for tonnes of CO₂ equivalent and is a metric measure that is used to compare emissions from various greenhouse gases on the basis of their Global Warming Potential (GWP) by converting amounts of other gases to the equivalent amount of CO₂².

- | | |
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| <p>5.4 In addition to annually reporting on our carbon footprint, we will continue to update our Environment Strategy Delivery Plan at least quarterly, to ensure regular monitoring is taking place.</p> <p>5.5 The progress that has been made since our baseline carbon footprint was calculated for 2019/20 is shown in Figure 3. Commentary has been made in each Annual Progress Report</p> | <p>in relation to the relevant year of data. The position at the end of the 2023/24 reporting period was that there had been a 22% reduction in the carbon emissions generated by Council activities when compared to the baseline.</p> |
|---|---|

² <https://coolerfuture.com/en/blog/co2e>

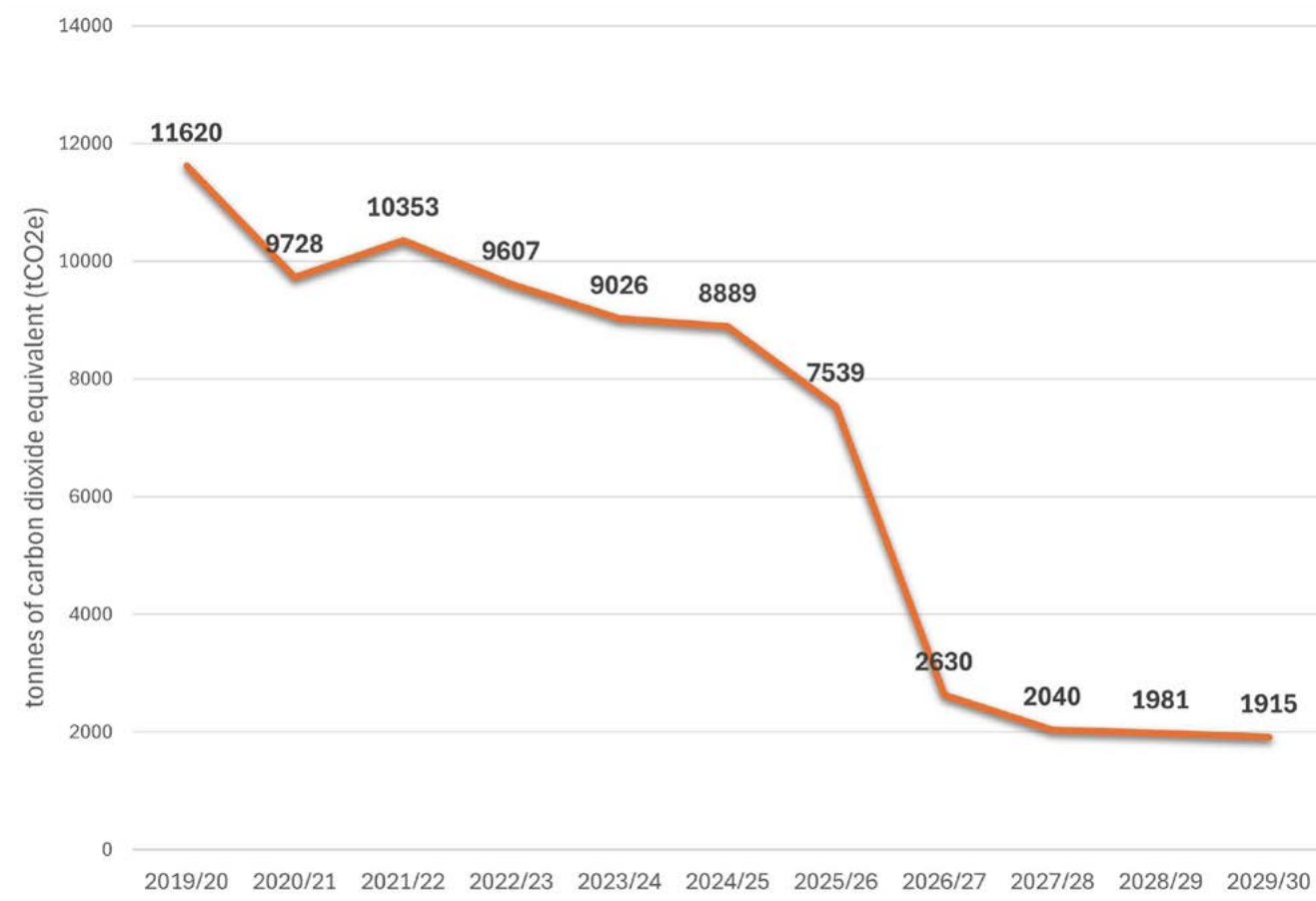
Figure 3: West Berkshire Council's Carbon Footprint (tCO2e) 2019/20 – 2023/24



6. Our pathway to net zero

- 6.1 As we consider where we are at this point on our journey (as shown in Figure 3), it is clear there is a significant challenge to achieve our net zero ambitions over the next 5 years.
- 6.2 A number of projects and changes in the way we approach our activities are planned for this period. Together they will help us on our pathway to net zero. They are funded in ways which always seek to deliver best value for money. This includes maximising opportunities for external grant funding. For example, in the list below in 6.3, grant funding from Sport England will contribute to solar panels being installed at one of our leisure centres and grant funding of £2.8million from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will be used to deliver decarbonisation works at Northcroft Leisure Centre.
- 6.3 Upcoming projects that will help to reduce our emissions and which are included in the Council's plans with funding allocated to them are:
- Change in fleet to electric vehicles (cars and light duty vehicles) – achieving 25% fleet being EV is funded (Scope 1)
 - Installation of rooftop solar pv on Council buildings (delivering a pipeline of projects at suitable locations) (Scope 2)
 - Solar energy generation (rooftop and ground mounted solar panels) at Padworth Recycling Centre (Scope 3)
 - Using HVO fuel (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) for our food waste collection vehicles (Scope 3)
 - Decarbonisation scheme at Northcroft Leisure Centre (Scope 3)
- 6.4 In addition, we have considered other projects that can be considered as 'off-setting' the Council's emissions from its activities. It is important to the Council that any off-setting is local and preferably comes from projects we have initiated or activity on our land. The off-setting from planned projects and evidence gathered is set out below:
- Delivery of a solar farm near Grazeley to generate renewable energy (off-setting activity and income generating project)
 - Carbon sequestration from natural capital on Council land. We have undertaken a high-level study to establish the carbon which is being sequestered across land that the Council owns and manages, or is managed on our behalf by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) (off-setting).
- 6.5 Knowledge of buildings that will be coming out of the Council's portfolio over the coming period will also contribute to the overall picture and account has been taken of this in the known pathway scenario set out in Figures 4 and 5. The main examples of this are schools which are moving from being Local Authority Schools to becoming Academies. The Council's portfolio of buildings remains large and there will always be a desire to make best use of our estate and not to hold on to assets unless they are delivering an efficient benefit. The disposal of assets in the future could be an appropriate approach to helping to reduce our carbon footprint.

Figure 4: West Berkshire Council's predicted Carbon Footprint (tCO₂e) 2019/20 – 2029/30 – committed projects



6.6 Figure 4 extends the position shown in Figure 3 into the future with the reduction in emissions from known and funded projects taken into account. The impacts from the activities mentioned in 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 all contribute to the pathway shown in Figure 4. This shows that the 'gap' at our net zero target date of 2030 is 1,915 tCO₂e.

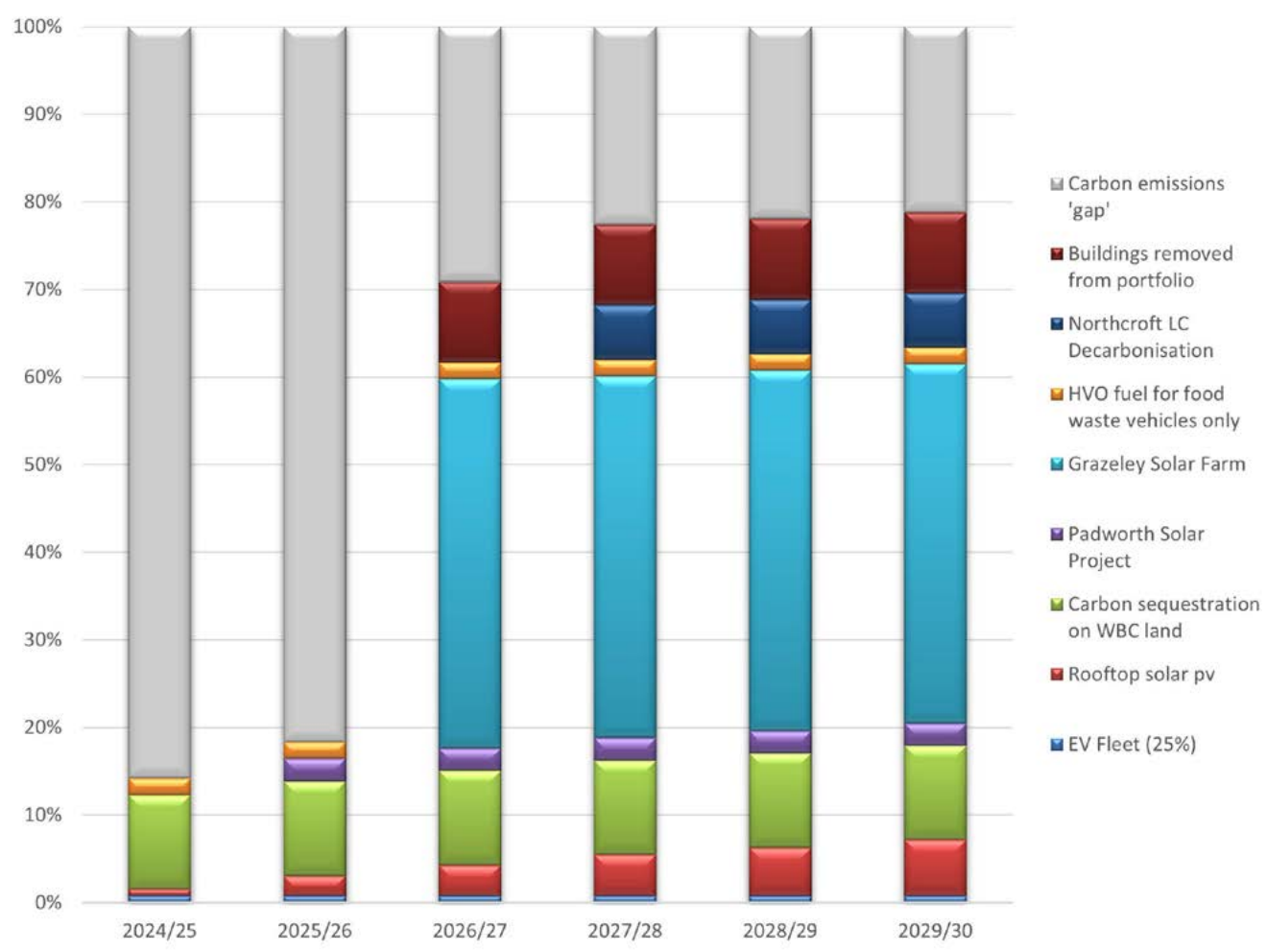
6.7 The timings for the start of the different projects that contribute to the pathway in Figure 4 are shown in Table 1. The contribution that each project or activity makes to the overall reduction is demonstrated through the make-up of the bars on the graph in Figure 5. The same data is used for Figures 4 and 5.

Table 1: Timings of commencement of funded projects and their contribution to the pathway to net zero

Project	Start year
25% WBC fleet cars and light duty vehicles that are ULEV.	2024/25
Solar Panel Installations on WBC buildings.	2024/25
Carbon sequestration on WBC owned land	2025/26
Padworth Solar Panel installations	2025/26
Grazeley Solar Farm	2026/27
HVO fuel for some waste/ recycling vehicles.	2026/27
Northcroft Leisure Centre decarbonisation works	2027/28

Figure 5: West Berkshire Council's predicted Carbon Footprint (tCO₂e) - breakdown of contribution of committed projects and known activities

Chart shows how the latest known position of 9026 tCO₂e (in 2023/24) could be reduced by committed projects and the grey 'gap' that would remain



6.8 Consideration has been given to how 'the gap' could be closed to meet our target of net zero by 2030. Prior to considering further projects where we can estimate the likely carbon impact, it is worth remembering that no account has been taken of the additional efforts on activities where the carbon impact is hard to predict and measure. An example of such a project is the introduction of a Sustainability Assessment Tool (SAT) which assesses the wide range of possible impacts that a proposed project will have on environmental and socio-economic criteria. The Council is introducing this tool for projects that meet certain thresholds in order to keep improving the quality of delivery, including a project's impact on emissions.

6.9 In addition, as education and engagement on climate, ecological and general sustainability matters increases, there are behavioural changes that happen which will contribute to the Council's pathway to net zero. These changes, which might relate to being more efficient with energy use for example, could contribute well if they happen consistently across the Council's building portfolio.

6.10 Such changes that are hard to measure could, over the years, make a good contribution to reducing the 1,915 tCO₂e gap and strengthen the Council's opportunity for meeting its target. These types of changes are not measured or included in any of the calculations or graphs presented in this document so

would act as impacts on top of those projects being discussed.

- 6.11 The options that have been considered for possible future investment by 2030 are:
- Increasing the use of EVs to 100% of the Council's fleet (cars and light duty vehicles)
 - Expanding the use of HVO fuel to all waste and recycling vehicles
 - Investment in further decarbonisation projects across the Council's estate
 - Changing tariff so that the Council only uses 100% green energy
 - Additional off-setting activities (more renewable energy generation, further carbon sequestration, etc)

6.12 The value for money for each of the above options varies as does the opportunity to realistically deliver the options prior to 2030. Based on these considerations of value for money and opportunity to deliver, a possible option for further projects that could see the 2030 target being achieved is set out below in Figure 6.

6.13 The additional projects included in the pathway shown in Figure 6 are as follows:

- 100% of the Council's fleet (cars and light duty vehicles) being EVs by 2030
- All waste and recycling vehicles using HVO fuel
- Additional decarbonisation projects being delivered at Council sites where initial feasibility work has been carried out

6.14 Including these possible additional projects above serves as an example of how 'gap' could be addressed. This scenario has been chosen as an illustration because it includes the projects that deliver best value for money and serve to reduce the Council's emissions rather than further off-setting. If this scenario was to be delivered it would need further detailed planning and resourcing both in terms of staffing and funding. Grant funding might be available for the decarbonisation projects.

Figure 6: A possible scenario for West Berkshire Council's pathway to net zero with additional (uncommitted) projects included in future Carbon Footprint calculations (tCO₂e) 2019/20 – 2029/30

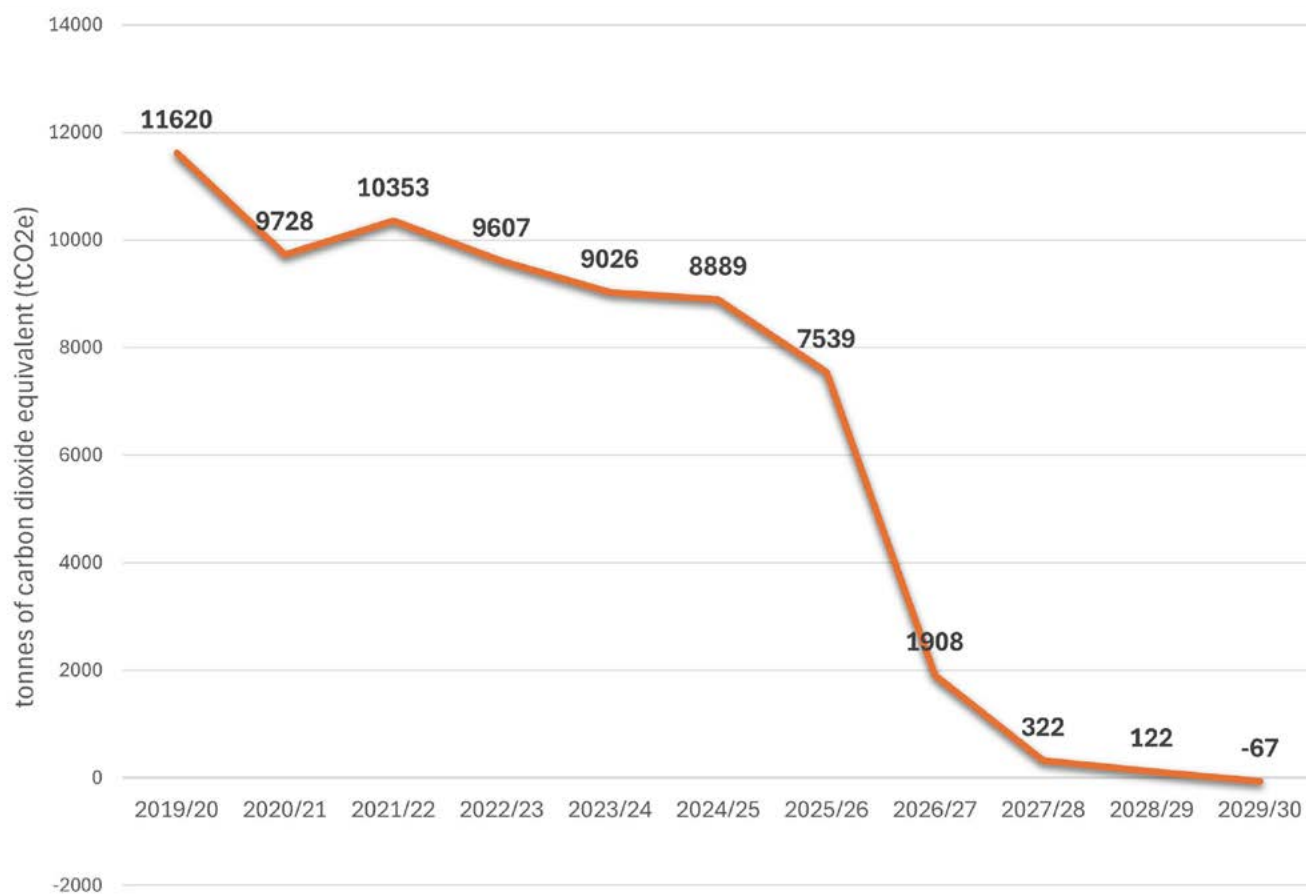
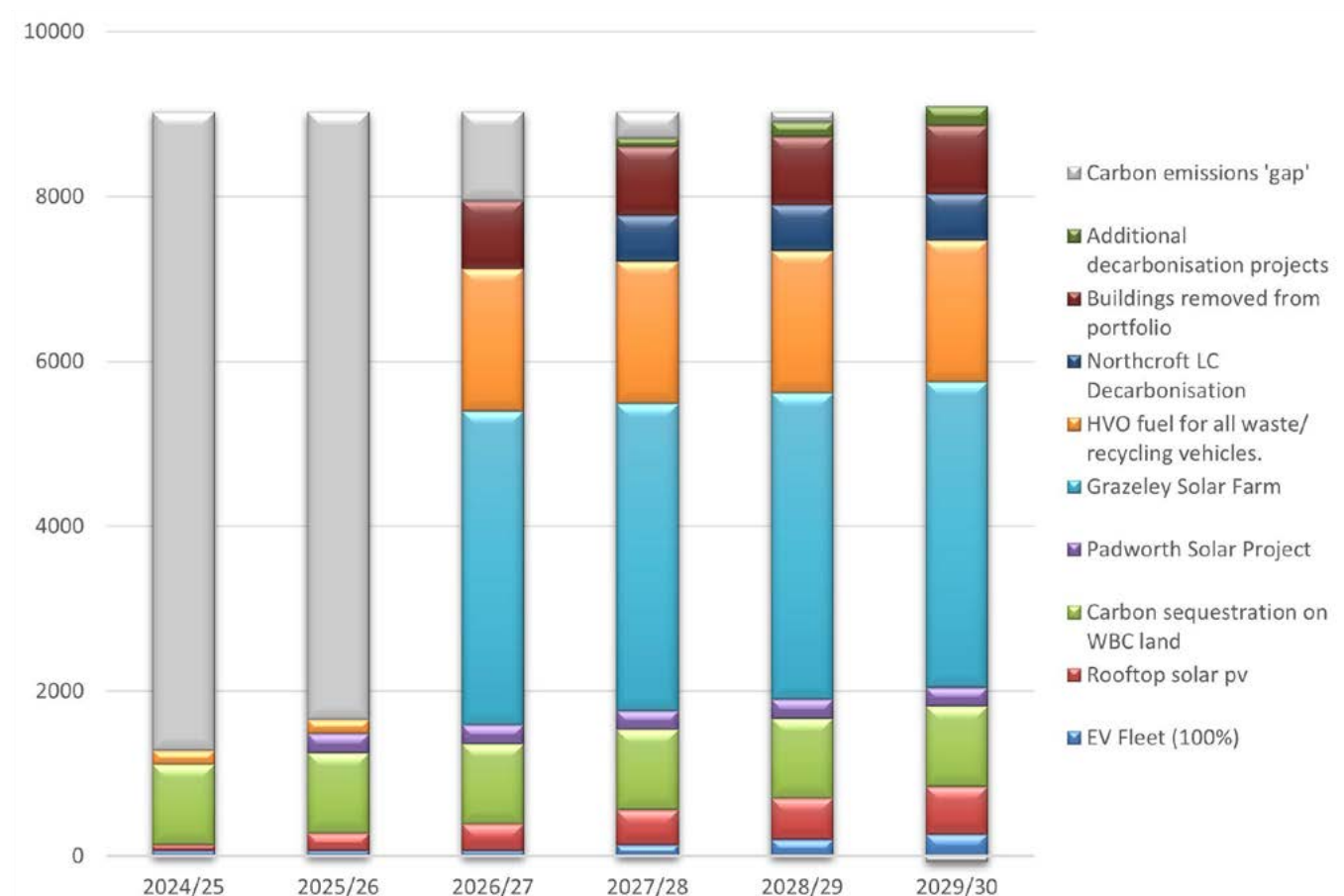


Figure 7: Breakdown of the contribution of known activities, committed and uncommitted projects as an illustration of a possible pathway to achieve net zero by 2030

Chart shows how the latest known position of 9026 tCO₂e (in 2023/24) could be reduced by identified projects.



6.15 As Figure 6 shows, this scenario may take the Council's position beyond the point of net zero. This would deliver a better outcome than the target or provides an element of comfort and contingency should some of the projects not deliver the anticipated reductions.

6.16 The way in which the projects contribute to the possible scenario which achieves net zero is illustrated in Figure 7.

Conclusion

6.17 The detailed work informing our pathway to net zero will aid us in our focus for delivery over the coming period up to 2030. Our Delivery Plan will be refreshed at least each quarter reflecting projects that have been completed and new tasks that have been added as opportunities arise. Consideration will be given to the best way to close the 'gap' to reach net

zero and the appropriate plans will be made and bids for funding submitted. Through the annual reporting on our carbon footprint, our plans will be refreshed as we consider our progress on the pathway to our target of net zero by 2030.

6.18 In addition to the clear focus we will have on our own pathway to net zero, we will also engage in the activities we can undertake to influence and assist in the District as a whole making progress to net zero. As expressed in the original Environment Strategy published in July 2020, the Council cannot deliver this wider outcome alone and everyone in West Berkshire has a role to play. The changes residents, businesses and communities are able to make will vary in impact but all are important as we work towards a shared aspiration for our environment.

Appendix A – National Context

Legislation, documents and strategies which set the national context relevant to themes set out in section 4 of this strategy refresh are provided in this appendix. Different aspects of the national policy context will be developing regularly. Some elements are critical to helping local delivery of improved outcomes for the environment.

The themes we have structured our Strategy Refresh around are:

- Energy Efficiency and Renewables
- Sustainable Transport
- The Natural Environment
- Waste Reduction & Recycling

Energy Efficiency and Renewables:

[2023 The Energy Act](#)

The Energy Act is one of the most significant pieces of energy legislation in recent history. It aims to make various improvements by promoting clean energy technologies, improving energy security, and enabling a transition to a low carbon future.



Sustainable Transport:

[The Second Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy \(CWIS II\)](#)

This outlines the Government's ambition for cycling and walking in England;

- To make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey by 2040
- Increase the percentage of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled to 50% in 2030 and to 55% in 2035
- Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis2>

[Decarbonising Transport: A better, cleaner Britain \(2021\)](#)

This plan sets out the UK Government's commitments and the actions needed to decarbonise the entire transport system in the UK. It covers active travel, road transport (including motorcycles, road freight, buses and coaches), the rail network, aviation and maritime.

The current pathway, amended by the UK Government at the start of 2024 is outlined in the zero-emission vehicle mandate, sets out the percentage of new zero emission cars and vans manufacturers will be required to produce each year up to 2030. The changes to the pathway essentially push back the 2030 target set in 2020 back to 2035. The revised headline for this being;

- 80% of new cars and 70% of new vans sold in Great Britain will now be zero emission by 2030, increasing to 100% by 2035.

[Pathway for zero emission vehicle transition by 2035 becomes law - GOV.UK](#)

- We will deliver a world class cycling and walking network in England by 2040

The Natural Environment:



2021 The Environment Act

The Environment Act aims to improve air and water quality, tackle waste, increase recycling, halt the decline of species and improve our natural environment.

It incorporates many important activities, including:

- [Nutrient Neutrality](#)
- [Biodiversity Duty](#)
- [Local Nature Recovery Strategies \(LNRS\)](#)
- [Biodiversity Net Gain](#)

[The National Planning Policy Framework](#) ensures that [Local Plans](#) strengthen Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI).

Waste Reduction and Recycling:



Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

Under the proposals, packaging producers will be responsible for the full net cost of managing the packaging they handle or place on the market. This includes the cost of collecting, transporting, sorting and disposal of packaging waste, whether from households or businesses.

The EPR aims increase recycling rates, reduce excessive packaging, increase the quality of material that is recycled as well as reduce the amount of packaging that is littered.

www.fdf.org.uk/fdf/what-we-do/packaging-latest/extended-producer-responsibility/

Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

This scheme is due to be introduced in 2027. Under a DRS, people who buy drinks in certain kinds of containers will have to pay a small deposit, which they can reclaim when they are finished with their drink. In order to increase recycling and reduce litter. In England, the scheme will target plastic and metal drinks containers between 50 ml and 3 litres. The DRS has a proven track record of success in other European countries. For example, just 2 years after the scheme was launched in Latvia, the number of drinks containers found on the coastline of the Baltic Sea reduced by half.

<https://defraenvironment.blog.gov.uk/2025/01/31/introducing-the-deposit-return-scheme-for-drinks-containers/>

Simpler Recycling

The Government wants to achieve greater consistency in the materials that are collected for recycling by different English local authorities. Simpler Recycling will enable consistent, more streamlined collections from all households, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises (such as schools and hospitals). There are various implementation dates for this scheme, the first one being the 31st of March 2025 for businesses and relevant non-domestic premises.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/simpler-recycling-in-england-policy-update/simpler-recycling-in-england-policy-update

Emissions Trading Scheme

The UK Government is committed to achieving Net Zero by 2050. Therefore, they now plan to include Energy from Waste (EfW) plants in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) with effect from 2028.

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/uk-emissions-trading-scheme-scope-expansion-waste

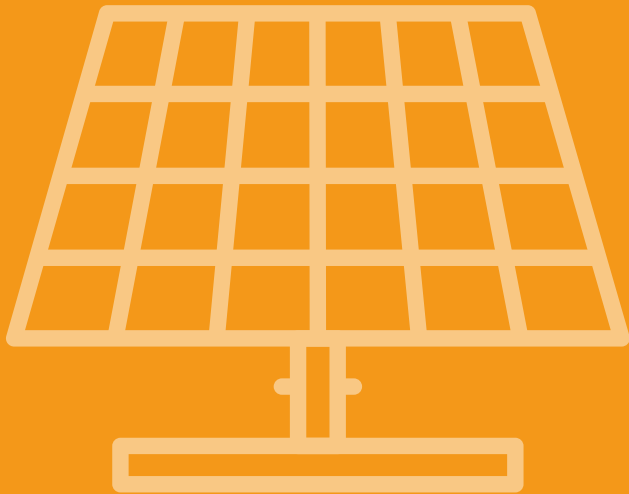
Appendix B – Glossary

This glossary provides an explanation of terms used in this annual report along with some additional terms which may also be of general interest relating to climate change and our environment.

Abbreviation	Term	Explanation
	Anaerobic Digestion	A process in which organic matter is broken down by micro-organisms in an oxygen free 'tank' to produce fuels.
	Baseline	A fixed point of reference used as a starting point for comparison purposes.
	Biodiversity	The variety of plant and animal life.
	Carbon budget	The maximum amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted over a certain period.
CCS	Carbon capture and storage	Trapping carbon at its emission source, and then storing it long term.
CO2e	Carbon Dioxide Equivalent	A term used to describe different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any greenhouse gases and their amount, it is the amount of carbon dioxide which would have the equivalent warming impact.
	Carbon footprint/carbon audit	The total greenhouse gas emissions caused by a person/event/organisation/product, expressed as the carbon dioxide equivalent.
	Carbon neutral/ carbon neutrality	Balancing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by offsetting, or removing from the atmosphere, an equivalent amount of carbon for the amount produced.
	Climate change	The long-term shift in the planets weather patterns and temperatures.
CCA	Climate Change Act 2008	Provides the framework for the UK's climate change policy
	Climate Change Bonds	Fixed income bonds, linked to climate change solutions.
	Climate Emergency Declaration	The Declarations vary for each organisation. The Council's Declaration is set out in the Introduction section of the Environment Strategy.
	CO2 emissions within the scope of influence of Local Authorities	The UK produces a breakdown of carbon dioxide emissions by Local Authority area as a subset of its annual inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. The emissions deemed to be within the scope of Local Authorities exclude large industrial sites, railways, motorways and land-use.
CCC	Committee on Climate Change	Independent body to advise the government on climate change.
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy	A charge which can be levied on new developments within the Local Authority's area. It helps deliver required infrastructure.

	Delivery Plan	The Council's plan on how the objectives of the Environment Strategy will be achieved.
	Economic Development Board	Newly formed Economic Board which will oversee the Economic Development Strategy, implementing an action plan to fulfil its objectives.
EU ETS	European Union Emissions Trading System	The first and largest greenhouse gas emissions trading system in the world. It works on a 'cap and trade' principle where allowances are set. Allowances are auctioned off or allocated for free. Emitters must ensure they have enough allowances to meet their emissions or purchase more. Those who reduce their emissions and have spare allowances can sell off their credits.
GWP	Global Warming Potential	<p>The potential of a Greenhouse Gas to trap additional heat in the atmosphere relative to Carbon dioxide.</p> <p>Specifically, it is a measure of how much energy the emissions of 1 tonne of a gas will absorb over a given period of time, relative to the emissions of 1 tonne</p> <p>of carbon dioxide. The larger the GWP, the more that gas warms the Earth compared to CO2 over that time period.</p>
	Green energy	Definitions would usually mean the gas or electricity were from 100% renewable sources.
GHG	Greenhouse gases	Gases in the atmosphere that absorb and re-emit heat. They occur naturally in the Earth's atmosphere but human activity increases these, leading to increased warming and climate change.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	The total monetary/market value of the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.
	Health and Wellbeing Board	A partnership that brings together West Berkshire's leaders of the health and social care system.
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators	A measurable value/outcome to gauge how well an organisation is meeting its key objectives.
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry	A greenhouse gas sector defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Programme	Sets out the Council's long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks
	Local Plan	The plan is part of the overall Development Plan for West Berkshire, setting out our local planning policies.
LTP	Local Transport Plan	Aims to deliver effective transport solutions for all by increasing choice and minimising congestion.

NAEI	National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory	The Inventory is compiled by Ricardo. It is the standard reference inventory for the UK and includes emission estimates for a wide range of important pollutants.
	Nature Recovery Plan	The plan defines the objectives and key actions required to improve biodiversity and wildlife in the district
	Net zero / Net zero carbon	Making changes to reduce carbon or GHG emissions to the lowest amount – and offsetting as a last resort to reach an overall net position of zero carbon.
	North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously AONB)	Area of countryside designated for conservation in recognition of its national importance.
	Per capita	The district's emissions divided by the number of people to give a value per person. This can be useful in comparing other areas of differing population size.
	Operational Control	A method of providing a boundary for an organisation to isolate its carbon emissions. This method describes where an organisation has functional operational control of an asset it will be included in calculations.
	Scope 1 Emissions	aka direct emissions, come from sources that are owned or controlled by an organisation, e.g. vehicles
	Scope 2 Emissions	(aka Energy indirect) come from the consumption of electricity used in an organisation's buildings
	Scope 3 Emissions	(aka other indirect) emissions come from goods/ services that an organisation utilise but are not directly responsible for e.g. investments.
SME	Small medium enterprises	Small or medium businesses are generally defined as businesses with less than 250 employees.
SuDs	Sustainable drainage systems	Systems designed to manage the drainage of surface water.
	Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership	An organisation bringing together business, public sector, education and community together to drive the local economy.
	Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum	A Forum to help prepare, respond and recover from emergency incidents.
	The National Adaptation Programme	This sets out the actions that the UK government and others will take over the next five-yearly cycle to adapt to the challenged of climate change.
ULEV	Ultra low emission vehicle	A vehicle that emits no more than 75g/km CO ₂ , based on the NEDC test, at the tailpipe. This includes pure electric, hydrogen, range-extender and plug in hybrid vehicles.
	Whole life carbon	The emissions created for every stage of an item/ buildings production, use and disposal.



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Appendix E

Environment Strategy Delivery Plan

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Environment Strategy Delivery Plan

The Environment Strategy for West Berkshire has been refreshed for the period 2025 - 2030. Alongside updating and refocusing the strategy, the Delivery Plan has also been refined and prioritised to fit with the refreshed strategy. The tabs in this Delivery Plan each cover a different key theme and contain relevant overarching actions and specific tasks to help achieve them.

This Delivery Plan will be updated at least every quarter. As new opportunities arise that fit with the priorities for delivery and offer good value for money, additional tasks will be added.

The **key themes** that structure the Delivery Plan are:

- Energy Efficiency and Renewables
- Sustainable Transport
- Natural Environment
- Waste Reduction and Recycling

There are **common threads** that link across all the themes and these are explained in the tab following the themes.

Lastly, a list of other strategies, plans and documents that this Environment Strategy Delivery Plan links with are included in the final tab.

For queries relating to the Environment Strategy Delivery Plan, please email: Environment@westberks.gov.uk



Theme	Overarching Action	Specific Tasks	Progress	Responsibility	Estimated timescale	Estimated carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Estimated cost	Net Zero Target contribution WBC/District/ Both
Energy Efficiency & Renewables	Work with partners to ensure good strategic planning in support of decarbonisation goals	(EER1) Progress a review of the Local Area Energy Plan and increase partnership working with neighbouring authorities.	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team	To be reviewed in 2025/6	TBC depending on the nature and size of projects.	£(up to 25k)	Both
		(EER2) Improve links with SSEN (Scottish & Southern Electricity Network) through regular engagement and use of bespoke planning tools	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team	Ongoing	N/A Enabling Project	Officer time	N/A
	Progress the decarbonisation of the Council's estate and activities	(EER3) Conduct further audits of the Council's buildings to: a) assess energy efficiency b) identify areas for improvement (e.g. develop Decarbonisation Plans) c) bid for funding and d) undertake projects to improve energy efficiency	In progress	WBC Property/WBC Environment Delivery Team/ Team/WBC Leisure Team	Ongoing- Longterm Project	TBC depending on the nature and size of projects.	££££ (over £0.5m)	WBC
	Deliver projects to generate renewable energy	(EER4) Install a large scale solar farm near Grazeley	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team	Delivery in 2025/26	3747-3646 tCO2e/year	££££ (Over £0.5m)	Both
		(EER5) Initiate, plan and deliver further projects to install renewable energy on existing council assets and properties	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team/WBC Property Team/WBC Leisure Team/ WBC Education Team	Main delivery phase 2024/25 -2027/28	71-580 tCO2e/year - currently this is based on solar PV but can be adjusted as and when WBC introduces other renewables.	££££ (Over £0.5m)	WBC
	Continue to develop good communications and partnership working to assist residents, communities, schools and businesses to become more energy efficient and decarbonise their activities.	(EER6) Work with stakeholders and support community groups, to ensure they have access to relevant funding to develop community proposals for the installation of renewable technology	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team	Ongoing	3-15 tCO2e/year - this is based on installing 25kWp of Solar pv by the end of 2024/25 financial year and each year beyond that 50kWp is installed.	Officer time	District
		(EER7) Providing landlords and home owners with advice on funding to improve energy efficiency and affordability (with a particular focus on properties where EPC (Energy Performance Certificates) are E or below)	Not started	WBC Environment Delivery Team/Housing Service	Ongoing	31 -127 tCO2e/year Assumes that E,F & G private rental accommodation is brought up to D standard.	Officer time	Both
		(EER8) Support residents to assist with energy switching and group buying schemes to ensure they have the most affordable tariffs and opportunities for good value green energy initiatives	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team/Housing Service	Ongoing	Low/Medium	Officer time	District

Theme	Overarching Action	Specific Tasks	Progress	Responsibility	Estimated timescale	Estimated carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Estimated cost	Net Zero Target contribution WBC/District/ Both
Sustainable Transport	Work with Partners to develop strategic plans and initiatives to support sustainable and low carbon travel across the District	(ST1) Develop the next Local Transport Plan for the district	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team/ Network Management	Summer 2025	N/A Enabling Action	£££ (£100k to £0.5m)	Both
		(ST2) Deliver the actions as identified within the Council's ULEV Strategy, including ensure 100% of the Council's (viable) light fleet vehicles uses ULEV by 2030	In progress	Various WBC Teams	By 2030	66 -264 tCO2e/year (average reduction) based upon fleet transitioning to EV	££££ (Over £0.5m)	Both
		(ST3) Expand car club activities to deliver vehicle locations in 3 new areas of the District (in addition to Newbury town already being served) by 2030 with a priority of using EVs wherever possible.	In discussion	Environment Delivery Team	By 2030	TBC	TBC	Both
		(ST4) Delivery of plans under relevant contracts to provide EV chargepoints in identified community areas to support residents and businesses switching to EVs NB: <i>Concession contract being considered April / May 2025 - Task may be updated as a result</i>	New 20-year contract being considered April / May 2025	Environment Delivery / Network Management Teams	Figure and timescale to be set once new contract is confirmed	TBC	TBC	Both
	Through effective communication and engagement promote sustainable travel options	(ST5) Encourage residents and visitors to use public transport by providing up to date information on bus and train routes and providing incentives where possible. In line with the Bus Service Improvement Plan.	TBC this is a new action	Transport Services/ WBC Environment Delivery Team	Ongoing	2775 tCO2e/year (This is based on the previous action and will need to be revised.)	££££ (over £0.5m)TBC. We will receive funding	District
	Effective use of travel plans and travel monitoring systems to inform future sustainable travel decisions	(ST6) Install a network of automatic active travel monitoring sites at key locations on the LCWIP (Local Cycle and Walking) Infrastructure primary network	In progress	WBC Network Management	TBC as there are new sites	N/A Enabling Action	££ (25k - £100k)	District
	Work with partners to develop active travel routes and hubs across the District	(ST7) Delivery of the priority routes identified in the Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Pla) (LCWIP)	In progress	WBC Network Management	Medium term (April 2023- March 2026)	Low/ Medium	The Council's Capital Programme details the funding allocated to delivery of active travel routes and will be enhanced by further grant funding where opportunities arise.	District
		(ST8) Deliver a Cycle Hub in Theale and investigate further sites.	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team/ GWR	Medium term (April 2023- March 2026)	Low	£££ (£100k- £ 0.5m)	District
	Develop Sustainable Travel initiatives for Council staff	(ST9) Implement a new travel policy for staff to incentivise more sustainable patterns of travel to/from work and on site visits	Delayed	WBC Environment Delivery Team	Short term (this is behind schedule).	Medium	££ (25k - £100k)	WBC

Theme	Overarching Action	Specific Tasks	Progress	Responsibility	Estimated timescale	Estimated carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Estimated cost	Net Zero Target contribution WBC/District/Both
The Natural Environmnet	Develop and implement a strategic approach to the creation of Natural Capital across the District	(NE1) Continue to develop a Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Framework to investigate an approach to natural regeneration to identify opportunities for rewilding, tree planting, CO2 capture and habitat conservation and creation across West Berkshire.	In progress	WBC Countryside Team and WBC Environment Delivery Team	Ongoing	N/A Enabling Action	£££ (£100k - £0.5m)	Both
		(NE2) Through the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership (NSDP) continue to work with key stakeholders across the district on developing opportunities for habitat creation and natural capital initiatives.	In progress	WBC Countryside Team and WBC Environment Delivery Team	Ongoing	N/A Enabling Action	Officer Time	Both
		(NE3) Develop an approach and deliver projects that will achieve the amount of Nutrient Mitigation in the River Lambourn Catchment Area required by the grant funding received through the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund	In progress	WBC Environment Delivery Team, Drainage Team, Planning and Ecology	2025 - 2027	Unknown as yet	TBC	Both
		(NE4) Engage and contribute to the development of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to establish a regional approach to nature recovery.	In progress	WBC Countryside Team and WBC Environment Delivery Team	2025/26	N/A Enabling Action	Officer Time	Both
	Working with partners, continue to develop and implement best practice methods of environmental land and water management.	(NE5): 'Work with partners to develop Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects to allow catchment wide adaptation to flooding.	In progress	Various WBC Teams and the Environment Agency	April 2026- March 2030	N/A	Officer Time	NA
		(NE6): Ensure hedgerow management on all council land is in accordance with good ecological practice guidance.	In progress	WBC Countryside Team	Ongoing	Low	£ (up to £25k)	District

Theme	Overarching Action	Specific Tasks	Progress	Responsibility	Estimated timescale	Estimated carbon reduction (tCO2e)	Estimated cost	Net Zero Target contribution WBC/District/Both
Waste Reduction & Recycling	Continue to develop the actions to reduce municipal waste and increase recycling rates	(WRR1) Reuse, recycle and compost at least 60% of municipal waste we handle by 2030.	In progress	WBC Waste Management	Long term (April 2026-March 2030).	161 tCO2e per year	TBC, awaiting more information from central government.	District
		(WRR2) Implement a kerbside collection system that is fully compliant with the minimum service standards required by the UK Government.	In progress, (must be complete by 31st March 2026).	WBC Waste Management	By March 2026	Medium	££££ (Over £0.5m)	District
		(WRR3) Encourage residents to consider how changes might be made to their own recycling habits so that the amount of waste unnecessarily sent to landfill is minimised.	In progress	WBC Waste Management Key support from Waste Minimisation Officer	Ongoing	Low/ Medium	Officer Time	District
	Reduce waste and increase recycling rates from Council activities	(WRR4) Work to reduce waste and increase the recycling rate of WBC's offices via improved awareness of the recycling scheme and provision of improved facilities where required.	In progress	Facilities Management/Environment Delivery (Comms assistance)	Ongoing	Low/ Medium	£ (up to £25k)	WBC

There are a number of aims or approaches that are relevant to all the themes identified in the Environment Strategy / Delivery Plan. These are therefore identified as common threads. A brief explanation of each of the 5 common threads across all themes is given below along with some examples of how we deliver these threads and other relevant key links.

Common Thread	Explanation	Examples of relevant work/ links to relevant documents
Net Zero	Net zero is a position the Council seeks to achieve for its own activities by 2030. There is also a commitment to assist in the achievement of net zero for the District. This is a larger task and will involve all individuals, communities, organisations and businesses playing their part. Many of the schemes, projects and actions across all the themes will contribute in some way to the Council reducing its carbon impact or to the reduction of the District's carbon footprint.	Solar PV Grazeley- Webpage / HVO/
Health and Wellbeing	Many actions under the themes of the Delivery Plan will have a positive impact on health and wellbeing. Whether this is through reduced emissions from transport creating cleaner air, or enhancement of and greater access to nature, we aim to improve health and wellbeing through our activities and guard against any detrimental impacts. This supports the Council's commitment to a 'health in all policies' approach across the organisation.	Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030 - West Berkshire Council
Communications	Communication is key to working effectively. The Council will seek to communicate effectively and in a variety of ways to ensure residents, communities, organisations and businesses are aware of our plans and proposals. The importance of communicating successes of our own and others is recognised as an important way of encouraging others with ideas and inspiration. We will also seek to learn from others who communicate their innovative projects and help us to improve our projects and plans.	Environment Newsletter (monthly) Press releases Green Hub on Website
Partnerships	West Berkshire Council seeks to work in partnership wherever possible, particularly where this will strengthen outcomes, make the best use of resources and support, build and encourage community action. Existing partnership working has delivered some excellent outcomes and opportunities for new partnerships are encouraged.	BBOWT West Berkshire Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership
Education and Engagement	Providing information to help increase knowledge on climate and sustainability matters across the themes is important to enable and encourage understanding leading to action and behavioural change. Opportunities for engagement to support this education and joint learning are built into the Council's work alongside a desire to take up new opportunities for engagement where they deliver on important objectives and priorities.	Town and Parish Council Climate Forum https://www.westberks.gov.uk/parish-climate-forum Environment Advisory Group Open Forum Eco Champions (Internal)

Publication:	Link/ Notes:
The Environment Strategy	https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/49068/Environment-Strategy-2020-2030/pdf/Environment_Strategy_2020-2030_updated.pdf?m=1615892303337 Refreshed Strategy due to be published May 2025
WBC Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle Strategy	Refreshed strategy due to be published Summer 2025
Local Area Energy Plan	Summary version available
Local Transport Plan	transport-plan
Bus Service Improvement Plan	2023/pdf/West_Berkshire_Council_Final_BSIP_2023.pdf?m=1699346886323
Flooding Be Prepared! Leaflet	https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/57946/Flood-Booklet/pdf/Flood_Booklet.pdf?m=1704368266770
Social Value Policy	https://intranet/media/51707/Social-Value-Policy/pdf/Social_Value_Policy_20211.pdf?m=1710415437047
West Berkshire Vision 2026 (refreshed 2023)	2019/pdf/WBV_2036_final_19.pdf?m=636903249717100000
The Council Strategy	2027/pdf/WBC_Strategy_Sep_23_Final.pdf?m=1695826265037
The Local Transport Plan 2011-2026	2026.pdf?m=1575546429557
Waste strategy	West Berkshire Waste Management Strategy 2025-2032 - West Berkshire Council
The Emerging Local Plan	Examination of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 - West Berkshire Council
West Berkshire Council Tree Policy	Not yet published
The Parking Strategy	Due to be published in Summer 2025

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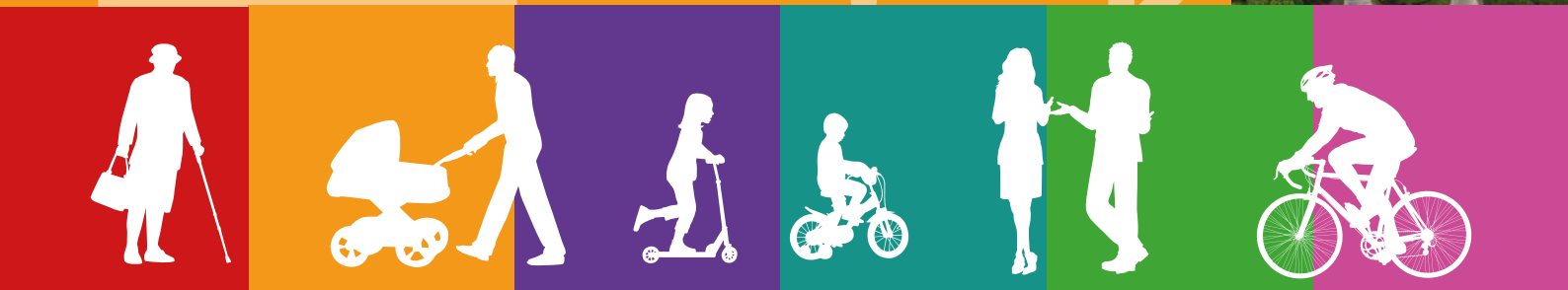
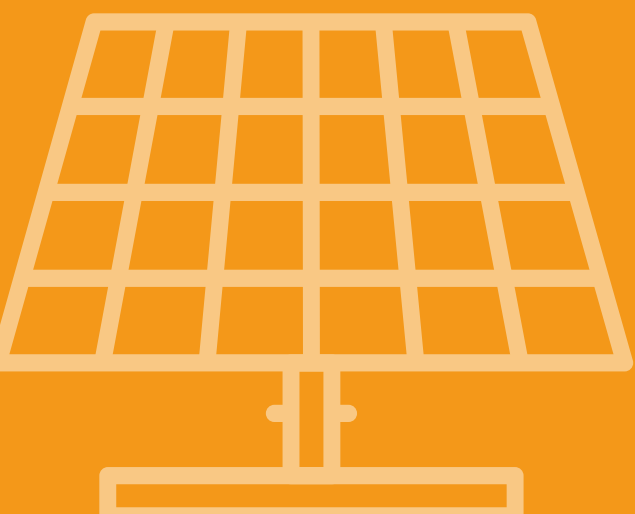
Appendix F

Carbon Definitions Report

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Environment Strategy

Carbon definitions report



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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1. Purpose

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| <p>1.1 This document aims to provide clarity on the terms used by West Berkshire Council (WBC) in relation to carbon emissions and targets, and how these terms relate to the Council's policies, strategies and guidance. It serves to provide further clarity when communicating to Members, Officers, Residents, Businesses and Community Groups on the various nuances of carbon emissions.</p> | <p>1.2 The terminology outlined in this document will be added to the Council's webpage and linked to the final draft of the Environment Strategy Refresh.</p> |
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2. Background

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| <p>2.1 On 2nd July 2019, WBC unanimously declared a Climate Emergency. As part of this commitment to act, the Council committed to creating a strategic plan for West Berkshire that aims to deliver carbon neutrality by 2030. Following the declaration, the Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan were produced which outlined the approach the Council would take in meeting the outlined target. The Council, in its monitoring and reporting, has separated out the reporting of its own impact and that of the whole District. It is clear that the Council is working towards a target of carbon neutrality by 2030 and supporting, encouraging and facilitating carbon neutrality across West Berkshire.</p> <p>2.2 Since the declaration of the Climate Emergency, terms in addition to 'carbon neutrality' have been used to describe carbon emissions which have led to some confusion.</p> <p>2.3 In October 2023, the Administration added the Ecological Emergency to the declaration. When the Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan was</p> | <p>written in 2020, it was written to address biodiversity and ecology elements in relation to the Climate Emergency declared, therefore the Administration deemed it appropriate to include Ecological Emergency in the declaration. On officer recommendation, the administration also changed the Council's terminology from carbon neutrality to Net Zero to align it with national Government terminology. The difference between the two terms is expanded on within the definitions below.</p> <p>2.4 At the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025, a refresh of the Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan took place to ensure the documents were fit for purpose to deliver against the Council's objectives five years from the 2030 target date.</p> <p>2.5 Based on research, this document outlines a number of key definitions detailing how these definitions relate to the Council's activity at a Council and District-wide level.</p> |
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3. Definitions

GHG emissions

- 3.1 A greenhouse gas (or GHG) is any gas in the atmosphere which absorbs and re-emits heat, therefore keeps the planet's atmosphere warmer than it otherwise would be. The main GHGs in the Earth's atmosphere are water vapour, carbon dioxide (CO²), methane (CH⁴), nitrous oxide (N²O) and ozone.
- 3.2 This GHG Protocol Corporate Standard is an internationally recognised standard which provides standards and guidance for companies and other

types of organisations preparing a GHG emissions inventory. This is the standard West Berkshire Council follows. It covers the accounting and reporting of the six greenhouse gases covered by the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty for controlling the release of GHGs from human activities and the GHGs controlled under the treaty which are often referred to as "Kyoto gases".

- 3.3 In line with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, the six GHG gasses included under the Kyoto gases are as followed.

GHG	Global Warming Potential (GWP)
Carbon dioxide (CO ₂)	1 * ¹
Methane (CH ₄)	29.8 * ¹
Nitrous oxide (N ₂ O)	273 * ¹
Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)	4 to 12,400 * ²
Perfluorocarbons (PFCs)	6,630 to 11,100 * ²
Sulphur hexafluoride (SF ₆)	23,500 * ²

*¹Based on the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report

*²Based on the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (GHG Protocol)

- 3.4 Different greenhouse gases last in the atmosphere for different lengths of time, and they also absorb different amounts of heat. The impact a greenhouse gas is expressed by assigning it a Global Warming Potential (GWP) index figure normally over a 100 year period. For example, and as detailed above, CO² has an index value of 1, and the GWP for all other GHGs is the number of times more warming they cause compared to CO². E.g. 1kg of methane causes 29.8 times more warming over a 100 year period compared to 1kg of CO², and so methane as a GWP of 29.8.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

- 3.5 In terms of the quantity released and the total impact on global warming, carbon dioxide (CO²) is the most common GHG emitted by human activities. Sometimes the term "CO²" is used as a shorthand way of describing all greenhouse gases, this can lead to confusion. A more accurate way of referring to a number of GHGs collectively is to use the term "carbon dioxide equivalent" or "CO²e".

Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO²e)

- 3.6 "Carbon dioxide equivalent" or "CO²e" is a term for describing different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any quantity and type of greenhouse gas, CO²e signifies the amount of CO² which would have the equivalent global warming impact.

Carbon

- 3.7 Carbon is a chemical element which is present in many gases and compounds, for example, carbon combined with oxygen makes carbon dioxide (CO²). The term “carbon” is often used when talking about greenhouse gas emissions which can be ambiguous and potentially confusing. The term “Carbon” is sometimes used as a shorthand way of referring to CO², or greenhouse gases similar to the way CO² can be used as shorthand for GHG.

Embodied carbon

- 3.8 Embodied carbon refers to the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (often referred to simply as “carbon”) of a material.
- 3.9 In the built and infrastructure environment, it refers to emissions arising from the manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance, and disposal of building materials (often referred to as ‘life cycle’) and excludes GHG emissions associated with the operation of a building or portion of infrastructure. It considers how many greenhouse gases (GHGs) are released throughout the supply chain – this can be throughout the entire ‘life cycle’ or a proportion of a ‘life cycle’. Embodied carbon ‘life cycle’ can be measured from cradle to gate (factory), or cradle to site (of use). Embodied carbon may also be measured with the boundaries of cradle to grave (end of life), which is the most complete boundary condition or ‘life cycle’. This boundary includes the extraction of materials from the ground, transport, refining, processing, assembly, in-use (of the product) and finally its end-of-life profile.
- 3.10 The scope of the embodied carbon needs to be clearly defined at the beginning of a project.

Whole Life-Cycle Carbon

- 3.11 Whole Life-Cycle Carbon (WLC) emissions are the carbon emissions resulting from the materials, construction and the use of a building over its entire life, including its demolition and disposal.

Operational carbon

- 3.12 Operational carbon, is the carbon released from the ongoing energy usage from the operation of a building. Operational energy usage comprises of regulated and unregulated energy. Regulated energy is building energy consumption resulting from the specification of controlled, fixed building services and fittings, including space heating and cooling, hot water, ventilation, fans, pumps and lighting. Unregulated energy is building energy consumption resulting from a system or process that is not ‘controlled’. E.g. IT equipment, lifts, cooking equipment etc.

Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions

- 3.13 Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions can be categorised into scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions. Scope 1 GHG emissions are produced from sources that an organisation owns or controls directly for example the burning of fuel in boilers, vehicles etc.). Scope 2 GHG emissions are produced indirectly when an organisation purchases electricity, steam, heating and cooling for their own uses. Scope 3 GHG emissions are also produced indirectly, however not as a result of the organisation itself, and not the result of activities from assets owned or controlled by them, but by those that it’s indirectly responsible for, up and down stream of its value chain e.g. contractors, purchased goods and materials.
- 3.14 It is important to produce an inventory of emission sources within each scope (where applicable) so a clear baseline can be set. Usually the baseline is established through looking at a year(s) of the organisations emissions so that an organisation can understand and track emissions over time.

Carbon Sequestration

- 3.15 Carbon sequestration is the capturing, removal and storage of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the earth's atmosphere and is one of the approaches being taken to tackle climate change. It's recognised as a key method for removing carbon from the earth's atmosphere. Carbon sequestration can happen in two basic forms: biologically or geologically. Also, while it's being encouraged artificially through various biological and geological methods, it also happens naturally in the environment on the biggest scale.
- 3.16 Biological carbon sequestration happens when carbon is stored in the natural environment. This includes what are known as 'carbon sinks', such as forests, grasslands, soil, oceans and other bodies of water. This is also known as an 'indirect' or passive form of sequestration.
- 3.17 Geological carbon sequestration happens when carbon is stored in places such as underground geological formations or rocks. This process is largely artificial or 'direct', representing an effective way of neutralising emissions put into human practices, such as manufacturing or construction. It's also largely technological as a result, with recent innovations showing carbon being sequestered more effectively on larger scales.

Offsetting

- 3.18 The terms carbon offset and carbon offset credit (or simply "offset credit") are used interchangeably, though they can mean slightly different things.
- 3.19 A carbon offset broadly refers to a reduction in GHG emissions for example via large scale low carbon or renewable technology i.e. solar PV farms – or an increase in carbon storage (e.g., through land restoration or the planting of trees) – that is used to compensate for emissions that occur elsewhere.

- 3.20 A carbon offset credit is a transferrable instrument certified by governments or independent certification bodies to represent an emission reduction of one metric tonne of CO₂, or an equivalent amount of other GHGs. The purchaser of an offset credit can "retire" it to claim the underlying reduction towards their own GHG reduction goals.

"Carbon neutral" vs "Net zero carbon"/ "Net Zero"

- 3.21 There is not a universally agreed definition of what is "Carbon neutral" and "Net zero carbon"/ "Net Zero", however there is a broad consensus from a number of bodies of their meanings.
- 3.22 It is generally agreed that carbon neutrality means balancing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 'offsetting' – or removing from the atmosphere – an equivalent amount of carbon for the amount produced. This means a commitment to carbon neutral does not require a commitment to reduce overall emissions.
- 3.23 In contrast, it is generally agreed that a commitment to net-zero carbon means making changes to reduce carbon emissions to the lowest amount – and offsetting as a last resort. Often the term is simply referred to as "Net zero" meaning this term includes all greenhouse gases, not just carbon dioxide. This definition is supported by a [UN report](#) published in 2022 which aims to provide a frame of reference for what it means for companies and other non-state entities to achieve Net Zero.

Science Based Targets

- 3.24 The [Science Based Targets](#) initiative (SBTi) is a global body established by Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), the United Nations Global Compact, World Resources Institute and World Wide Fund (WWF). The body enables companies and financial institutions to set ambitious emissions reductions

targets in line with the latest climate science. Science-based targets show companies and financial institutions how much and how quickly they need to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the worst effects of climate change.

- 3.25 Targets are considered 'science-based' if they are in line with what the latest climate science deems necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement – limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Low Zero Carbon Technology

- 3.26 Low and Zero Carbon Technology (LZC) is the term given to technologies that emit low levels of CO₂ emissions, or no net CO₂ emissions. Low and Zero Carbon Technology include technologies which are highly efficient but may require an element of grid electricity to operate which may be from a fossil fuel source or a renewable source. It is worth noting that low carbon technologies can be combined with renewable technologies to be even more efficient.
- 3.27 There are a number of technologies that can be used to provide heat for a building, emitting low or no net CO₂ emissions.
- Solar hot water
 - Air source heat pumps
 - Ground source heat pump
 - Combined Heat and Power (CHP)
 - Biomass heating
 - Efficient gas boiler
 - Solar photovoltaics (PV)
 - Wind turbines

Decarbonisation of the Grid

- 3.28 Decarbonising the grid or power sector means reducing its carbon intensity: that is, reducing the emissions per unit of electricity generated. Decarbonisation is being achieved by increasing the share of low-carbon energy sources, such as renewables and nuclear energy, and a corresponding reduction in the use of

fossil fuels. As more low-carbon energy sources are fed into the national grid, the lower the carbon intensity of our energy becomes.

Green Energy

- 3.29 Green Energy supply is supplied via the National Grid. Some energy suppliers offer green tariffs, which can either mean they'll match your usage with renewable energy generation or they will contribute towards environmental schemes on your behalf. Some green tariffs will directly supply renewable energy. Others involve energy companies purchasing renewable energy guarantee of origin (REGO) certificates on the open market. These certificates are issued to renewable energy generators for each megawatt hour of renewable energy generated. They can sell any excess certificates created at times of surplus to non-renewable energy generators, who then use them to create a 'green tariff'.

Blue Energy

- 3.30 Blue Energy supply for businesses is supplied via the National Grid. Electricity supply is backed exclusively by nuclear power generated from nuclear power stations. The Ofgem regulations require the Council's electricity supplier, EDF, to update their fuel mix disclosure by the 1 October following each reporting period of 1 April – 31 March. The latest publication therefore confirms that the 'Blue for Business' supply type was zero carbon.

Energy hierarchy

- 3.31 The Energy hierarchy refers to a way to reduce energy use in order to reduce CO₂ or CO₂e emissions. There are two ways the energy hierarchy is referenced.
- 3.32 In general terms the Energy Hierarchy lists the actions policy makers, industry and consumers need to take when it comes to energy sources and use, in order of most sustainable to least. The first step is to conserve energy and

change wasteful behaviour to reduce demand. The second step is to be energy efficient by using technology to reduce the demand and eliminate waste. The third step is to investigate renewable, sustainable resources. The fourth step is to investigate low carbon technology and carbon capture. The fifth step is to follow a conventional resource route and look to offset via the purchasing of credits.

- 3.33 In the built environment the Energy Hierarchy refers to the reduction of energy demand (be lean), the second step is to supply energy efficiently (be clean) and the third step is use renewable energy (be green).

4. Carbon emissions in the context of WBC's Policies, Strategies and Guidance

- 4.1 On 2nd July 2019, WBC unanimously declared a Climate Emergency. As part of this commitment to act, WBC have set a target of carbon neutrality for the Council by 2030 and to support, encourage and facilitate carbon neutrality across West Berkshire.

Carbon Neutral to Net Zero - Council Operations

- 4.2 The council is aiming to be a carbon neutral operation by 2030. This includes all scope 1, scope 2 emissions and the scope 3 emissions from business travel and the emissions from some of our contractors. We have included the emissions from our two largest contractors in terms of annual cost to West Berkshire Council which are currently Volker Highways and Veolia and our highest profile contractor which is currently Everyone Active who manage our leisure centres.
- 4.3 The Council's emissions are monitored in tonnes of CO² equivalent or CO²e (as detailed in the definitions section) which is used to compare emissions from various greenhouse gases (not just carbon dioxide) on the basis of their global warming potential. The Council's emissions baseline was set based on 2019/20.

Scope 1: Sewage processing, refrigerants, stationary combustion (e.g. boilers) and mobile combustion (fleet and personal vehicles).

Scope 2: Purchased electricity

Scope 3: Contractor emissions (Volker Highways, Veolia Waste Management and Everyone Active) and business travel.

- 4.4 Emissions are monitored from the following asset types: Schools, care homes, community buildings, car parks, day centres, family hubs, industrial buildings, land, libraries, museums, offices, residential, leisure centres, sewage works.
- 4.5 The Council monitors its scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions with the support of a GHG calculator tool developed by the Consultancy, WSP, which follows the internationally recognised GHG protocol.

Carbon Neutral to Net Zero – District Wide

- 4.6 District wide emissions are monitored using the UK local authority and regional estimates of carbon dioxide emissions from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). The data includes emissions from transport, industry, commercial, domestic and agriculture. The data excludes aviation, shipping and military transport, as this cannot be allocated to local areas. This is monitored in tonnes of CO² equivalent or CO²e (as detailed in the definitions section) which is used to compare emissions from various greenhouse gases on the basis of their global warming potential.
- 4.7 The scope of the District wide carbon emissions are detailed below alongside steps which can be taken by residents, businesses and community groups on where and how they can reduce their carbon emissions to achieve Net Zero Carbon. Given the scale of the challenge and the backdrop of the national target being 2050, the Council is committed to playing its part in contributing to the achievement of Net Zero Carbon for the District as soon as practicable.

District Emissions Scope	Transport	Industry & Commercial	Domestic	Agriculture
High level action areas	Engagement and Behaviour Change Programmes	Engagement and Behaviour Change Programmes	Engagement and Behaviour Change Programmes	Engagement and Behaviour Change Programmes
	Advice and Grant opportunities	Advice and Grant opportunities	Advice and Grant opportunities	Advice and Grant opportunities
	Implementation of Policies and Strategies to support the transition to Net Zero Carbon. For Example:	Implementation of Policies and Strategies to support the transition to Net Zero Carbon. For Example:	Implementation of Policies and Strategies to support the transition to Net Zero Carbon. For Example:	Implementation of Policies and Strategies to support the transition to Net Zero Carbon. For Example:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ultra Low Emission Vehicle strategy. - Local Transport Plan - Planning Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning Policy - Strategic Masterplans - Economic Development Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning Policy - Strategic Masterplans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planning Policy - Economic Development Strategy

Planning Policy - Current Core Strategy

4.8 *“Major development shall achieve the following minimum reductions in total CO₂ emissions (regulated and unregulated energy use) from renewable energy or low/zero carbon energy generation on site or in the locality of the development as long as a direct physical connection is used, unless it can be demonstrated that such provision is not technically or economically viable.*

The percentage reductions in CO₂ emissions should be based on the estimated CO₂ emissions of the development after the installation of energy efficiency measures related to either the Code for Sustainable Homes (no longer applicable), BREEAM or equivalent method has been applied.

- *Residential Development from 2016: Zero Carbon*
- *Non-Residential Development from 2019: Zero Carbon”*

4.9 Regulated Zero Carbon calculations and applicable BREEAM energy issues/ credits are based on the National Calculation Method (NCM). The NCM provides the underlying method and the standard data sets necessary to calculate the annual energy use of a proposed building and comparing it with the energy use of a ‘notional’ building of a similar type, under similar circumstances. This data is then then converted to CO₂ emissions. The calculation can use Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), the Approved Dynamic Simulation Models (DSMs) or Simplified Building Energy Model (SBEM) depending on the building type. These methodologies and models are used as the basis of compliance with Building Regulations Part L, EPCs and DEC. SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) documents are produced for dwellings, while BRUKL (Building Regulations UK, Part L) documents refer to non-domestic buildings.

- 4.10 Unregulated Zero Carbon calculations and applicable BREEAM requirements can be based on CIBSE TM54 - Evaluating operational energy use at the design stage.
- 4.11 In relation to the above methodologies and definitions detailed above, Zero Carbon should be expressed as CO². This definition is different to the Net Zero definition as it only accounts for CO² emissions.
- 4.12 Planning Policy - Local Plan Review (LPR) – not yet adopted
- 4.13 *'New development of one or more new dwellings and/or 100sqm or more of new non-residential floorspace should achieve net zero operational carbon emissions (regulated and unregulated energy) by implementing the energy hierarchy.'*
- 4.14 *Full detail including requirements and targets that need to be to be achieve can be found under policy DM4 and supporting text of the [Local Plan Review](#).*

Offsetting Projects

Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership

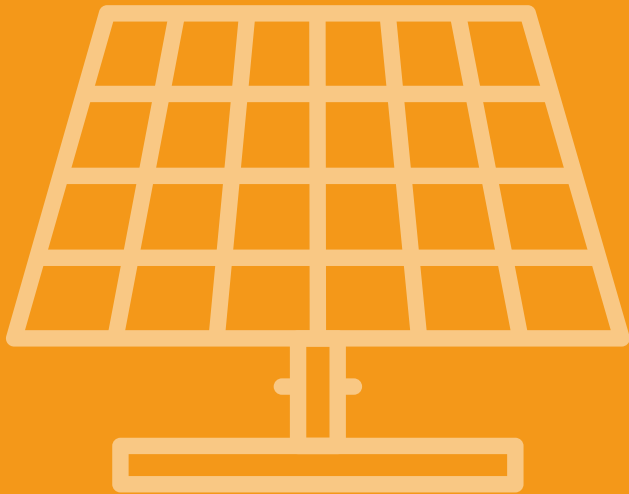
- 4.15 West Berkshire Council is a founding member of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership which is investigating district wide opportunities for biological carbon sequestration and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) across public and private land.
- 4.16 Carbon associated with biological sequestration is not static, instead it follows an 'S' curve meaning there is a small amount of carbon sequestration in the early years of the project with a steep rise in the middle of the project and then it plateaus towards the end of the project.

Net Zero Carbon - Council Operations

- 4.17 Where appropriate, the Council will undertake biological carbon sequestration on land that it owns. Where this is not possible, the aim will be (via the work of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership) private land will be identified and landowners encouraged to implement biological carbon sequestration projects (where appropriate).
- 4.18 Investing in biological carbon sequestration at a local or national level also supports other Council Environmental objectives such as Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality.

Large Scale Renewable Technology

- 4.19 Planning permission has been granted for a solar farm at Grazeley. Work on site is due to commence in the summer of 2025. The project will see a 20MWp solar farm installed on up to 75 acres of land the Council already own. The energy generated would represent a significant amount of off-setting which will be measured in CO²e. How and where the offsetting will be used is to be determined.



Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge progress review 2025

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	22 May 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Report Author:	Gabrielle Mancini
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4689

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To publish the results of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge progress review for West Berkshire Council, which was received by the Council on the 10th April 2025.

2 Recommendations

Executive is asked to consider:

- (a) the Corporate Peer Challenge progress review report produced by the LGA following a visit in January 2025; and
- (b) the progress made since the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge report was published in 2024.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.
Human Resource:	There are no direct HR implications as a result of this report.
Legal:	There are no direct Legal implications as a result of this report.
Risk Management:	There are no significant risk management issues as a result of this report.

Property:	N/A			
Policy:	There are no direct Policy implications as a result of this report.			
	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		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		N/A
Environmental Impact:		x		N/A
Health Impact:		x		N/A
ICT Impact:		x		N/A
Digital Services Impact:		x		N/A

Council Strategy Priorities:	x			The report highlights strengths and progress made following the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in 2024. Additional commentary is provided to consider further improvements which could be made to deliver the Council Strategy and core services.
Core Business:	x			The report highlights strengths and progress made following the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in 2024. Additional commentary is provided to consider further improvements which could be made to deliver the Council Strategy and core services.
Data Impact:		x		N/A
Consultation and Engagement:	SLT, Portfolio Holders			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This paper disseminates the results of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge progress review which took place in January 2025 (Appendix A). This progress review took place in order for the LGA to provide West Berkshire Council with feedback as to the progress made in response to recommendations made during a full Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in February 2024 (Appendix B).

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) offers a range of support for local authorities as part of a 'sector led improvement' programme. A component of the programme is the Corporate Peer Challenge, as a solution to reduce the inspection burden on local government, whilst aiming to provide robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to councils, by involving member and officer peers from other local authorities in the country. There are a number of different types offered, but all local authorities should have a Corporate Peer Challenge every four or five years. The Council's last Peer Challenge was in 2024, so the Council's request for a progress review in early 2025 was within expected timescales.

Background

- 5.2 The Corporate Peer Challenge progress report appended to this report was compiled by the LGA team following a visit which took place January 2025. The report covers the

findings, commentary on progress made, and details of the peer team (which was made up of senior officers, and councillors from other local authorities, with an LGA supporting officer).

5.3 The report gives details of the 11 recommendations made within the 2024 report, which formed the primary basis of an action plan, developed and implemented in the period between visits. They are namely:

- **Recommendation 1** – Urgently address overspending in children’s and adult services and build reserves, develop a clear plan that has buy-in from the whole organisation.
- **Recommendation 2** – Ensure that there is traction on the delivery of the Delivering Better Value SEND programme and have a plan to resolve the High Needs Block Deficit.
- **Recommendation 3** – Transformation needs to be embedded across the organisation with strong leadership from the political leadership, CLT, and an empowered central team to drive and enable transformation activity. Linked to this, the transformation programme needs to be bolder to help ensure that the council can get a grip of finances, particularly the overspends in children’s and adult services, and home to school transport.
- **Recommendation 4** – Invest time to strengthen relationships and ensure that the newly formed CLT are equipped as an effective senior officer leadership team to provide clear and consistent direction and stewardship for the organisation. This should be an ongoing area of work. Similarly, create more space for the Executive and CLT to jointly develop as a ‘Top Team’ to reinforce close working relationships and trust. Now that you have a permanent CLT in place, urgently stabilise the leadership below executive director level.
- **Recommendation 5** – Give greater clarity regarding priorities and focus on things that will make the most difference and that can be delivered within the council’s financial envelope and capacity. This will involve deprioritising things.
- **Recommendation 6** – Executive members should continue the good work settling into their new roles, taking up opportunities to develop their skills, and owning and leading their portfolios to ensure effective political leadership for the council.
- **Recommendation 7** – Simplify the governance structure to increase pace and agility.
- **Recommendation 8** – Ensure that strategic legal, HR, communications and transformation expertise has a place at the ‘top table’ in a meaningful way and at the right point of policy development and delivery.
- **Recommendation 9** – Test the extent to which the behaviour framework has been embedded within the organisation (e.g. through staff survey/ pulse survey).

- **Recommendation 10** – Strengthen communications and engagement activity further, by using internal communications expertise earlier in project planning, closing the communications loop via consistent feedback on outcomes of consultations, and embedding approaches that engage wider groups of people earlier in the process and in more meaningful ways.
 - **Recommendation 11** – Build on strong and positive operational relationships between the council and partners, including contractors, and develop strategic relationships that create opportunities to deliver activity that will support wider council and partner objectives (e.g. apprenticeships, social value). As part of this, develop a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- 5.4 The progress review report notes that two thirds of these actions have been completed as of January 2025, with progress being made towards the remaining third. The report details the positive impact this has had on the Council's effectiveness, in particular with respect to the strengthening effect of permanent political leadership being put in place and changes to leadership at officer level.
- 5.5 One of the most urgent recommendations within the original report related to the Council's financial position and the need to address overspends in Adult Social Care and Children and Family Services. The progress review reflected that the Council's financial challenges remain acute and that effective prioritisation and a whole organisation approach to budgetary management will be key to its future sustainability.
- 5.6 As well as the standard areas of focus included within all Corporate Peer Challenges, the Council has asked the LGA to look at SEND and Transformation in more detail. The progress report reflects that in both of these areas progress has been made, which has had a meaningful impact on outcomes and the Council's financial position. It will be important, however, to continue to focus on these areas to ensure that the benefits of work done to date can be fully realised.
- 5.7 The report also makes reference to the Council's willingness and capability to participate in, and benefit from, the objectives of the Government's Devolution White Paper. This has been particularly evident since the report was compiled through initial work done to compile an interim proposal for the formation of a new Ridgeway unitary authority in partnership with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils.

Proposals

The following recommendations are made:

- Executive is informed of the Corporate Peer Challenge progress review report produced by the LGA following a visit in January 2025.
- Executive is updated with the progress made since the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge report was published in 2024

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Not considering this report is an option; however, the Council found the Corporate Peer Challenge and associated progress review visit very valuable as part of its commitment to continuous improvement. The reports produced after each of these visits reflect on the Council's strengths and areas for further improvement. A careful consideration of the feedback, and recognition of the progress made in the period between visits, will ensure the maximum benefit from undertaking the Corporate Peer Challenge.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in February 2024 highlighted many of the Council's strengths and successes and identified key recommendations for further improvement. Since then, significant work has been done to address these recommendations as part of a comprehensive action plan. The progress review visit in January 2025 provided a timely opportunity to review the effectiveness of this work to date in order to identify where the Council is performing well, as well as where it might benefit from additional focus.
- 7.2 The progress review report is a useful tool which will inform West Berkshire Council's continuous improvement work, and it is therefore recommended that the report be noted as proposed in this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Corporate Peer Challenge progress review- 2025
- 8.2 Appendix B – Corporate Peer Challenge report and action plan- 2024

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 type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

West Berkshire Council

Friday 24th January 2025

Feedback



Corporate Peer Challenge

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1. Introduction

The council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during 6-9 February 2024, and published the [full report](#) with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the CPC process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's CPC Action Plan;
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team was 'on-site' including any further support needs; and
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.

The LGA would like to thank West Berkshire Council for their commitment to sector-led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in the ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at West Berkshire Council took place at the council on Friday 24th January 2025.

The Progress Review focussed on the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge:

- **Recommendation 1** – Urgently address overspending in children's and adult services and build reserves, develop a clear plan that has buy-in from the whole organisation.
- **Recommendation 2** – Ensure that there is traction on the delivery of the Delivering Better Value SEND programme and have a plan to resolve the High Needs Block Deficit.

- **Recommendation 3** – Transformation needs to be embedded across the organisation with strong leadership from the political leadership, CLT, and an empowered central team to drive and enable transformation activity. Linked to this, the transformation programme needs to be bolder to help ensure that the council can get a grip of finances, particularly the overspends in children's and adult services, and home to school transport.
- **Recommendation 4** – Invest time to strengthen relationships and ensure that the newly formed CLT are equipped as an effective senior officer leadership team to provide clear and consistent direction and stewardship for the organisation. This should be an ongoing area of work. Similarly, create more space for the Executive and CLT to jointly develop as a 'Top Team' to reinforce close working relationships and trust. Now that you have a permanent CLT in place, urgently stabilise the leadership below executive director level.
- **Recommendation 5** – Give greater clarity regarding priorities and focus on things that will make the most difference and that can be delivered within the council's financial envelope and capacity. This will involve deprioritising things.
- **Recommendation 6** – Executive members should continue the good work settling into their new roles, taking up opportunities to develop their skills, and owning and leading their portfolios to ensure effective political leadership for the council.
- **Recommendation 7** – Simplify the governance structure to increase pace and agility.
- **Recommendation 8** – Ensure that strategic legal, HR, communications and transformation expertise has a place at the 'top table' in a meaningful way and at the right point of policy development and delivery.
- **Recommendation 9** – Test the extent to which the behaviour framework has been embedded within the organisation (e.g. through staff survey/ pulse survey).
- **Recommendation 10** – Strengthen communications and engagement activity further, by using internal communications expertise earlier in project planning, closing the communications loop via consistent feedback on outcomes of

consultations, and embedding approaches that engage wider groups of people earlier in the process and in more meaningful ways.

- **Recommendation 11** – Build on strong and positive operational relationships between the council and partners, including contractors, and develop strategic relationships that create opportunities to deliver activity that will support wider council and partner objectives (e.g. apprenticeships, social value). As part of this, develop a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with the Voluntary and Community Sector.

West Berkshire Council accepted all the recommendations made during the LGA CPC and subsequently produced an action plan outlining the steps the council would take to respond to these recommendations.

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Cllr Gareth Roberts – Leader, Richmond Council
- Laura Church – Chief Executive, Bedford Council
- James Walton – Executive Director Resources, Shropshire Council
- Barbara Peacock – National SEND Children's Improvement Adviser, LGA
- Emily Bennett – NGDP management trainee, LGA (shadow peer)
- Kate Herbert – Principal Adviser for London, LGA (peer challenge manager)

The peer team would like to thank all those that they spoke to as part of the Progress Review for their participation and openness.

3. Progress Review – Feedback

The council's CPC action plan breaks down each of the 11 recommendations and identifies a number of actions to be delivered to respond to the recommendation. Of the 54 actions, 8 had deadlines for delivery that were not yet due at the point of the Progress Review. Of those that were due to be delivered, 67% were marked as complete or recurring actions that were being delivered, and 33% were marked as delivered slightly behind schedule or were in development.

Local Priorities and Outcomes

Since the Corporate Peer Challenge took place, West Berkshire has achieved a number of positive developments: the Council's Adult Social Care service received a 'Good' rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in February 2024; the introduction of a Residents Newsletter has improved communication with the community; and there has been encouraging progress on the Local Plan, with the Full Council deciding in November 2024 to proceed to a final public consultation over Spring and Summer 2025.

The peer team recommended that the Council should provide greater clarity regarding priorities and focus on things that will make the most difference and that can be delivered within the council's financial envelope and capacity, flagging that this will involve deprioritising things. During the Progress Review, the peer team heard that the Council has reviewed the Council Strategy Delivery Plan for 2024.25 and sought to rationalise its priorities, with a paper due to be considered by the Executive in February 2025. The proposal is for a reduction of key measures from 200 to around 20, which will be the focus of quarterly reporting to members. The peer team also heard that internally the Extended Leadership Team (ELT) has focused on ten key measures, which have been shared with staff to highlight where staff can make a measurable impact in the short term. These are welcome developments. Given the financial context facing the Council, the peer team stressed that clarity on prioritisation and deprioritisation needs to lead to delivery at pace.

Organisational and Place Leadership

Since the peer team was last in West Berkshire, there have been changes in both political and officer leadership at the Council. Cllr Jeff Brooks became the Leader of the Council in May 2024, with Cllr Denise Gaines as the Deputy Leader. This has resolved the uncertainty regarding the acting political leadership arrangements that the peer team observed during the Corporate Peer Challenge in February 2024.

Additionally, the former chief executive left the Council in November 2024, and Joseph Holmes has taken on the role of Interim Chief Executive, with Sarah Clarke stepping up as Interim Executive Director (Resources), and Shannon Coleman-

Slaughter as Section 151 Officer. The interim arrangements for the chief executive have been well-received, and staff spoke positively about the Leader and Interim Chief Executive walking the floor and talking to staff, answering any questions they might have.

The Corporate Peer Challenge recommended that the council should invest time to strengthen relationships and ensure that the (at the time) newly formed Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) were equipped as an effective senior officer leadership team to provide clear and consistent direction and stewardship for the organisation. The peer team also recommended that more space should be created for the Executive and CLT to jointly develop as a 'Top Team' to reinforce close working relationships and trust. During the Progress Review, the peer team heard that a LGA Top Team programme bringing together the CLT and Executive was underway, and had been well-received, identifying ways in which to enhance working relationships and practice, and supporting conversations around prioritisation.

The Corporate Peer Challenge also recommended that the leadership below executive director level needed to be urgently stabilised. During the Progress Review, the peer team heard that there has been a number of appointments to the Senior Leadership Team, resulting in fewer interim arrangements in place compared to when the Corporate Peer Challenge took place. Positively, in focus groups during the Progress Review, staff fed back to the peer team that senior officers are now more visible and accessible

Looking outward, the Corporate Peer Challenge recommended the Council to build on strong and positive operational relationships between the council and partners, including contractors, and develop strategic relationships that create opportunities to deliver activity that will support wider council and partner objectives. During the Progress Review, the peer team heard about the forthcoming Vision 2050 work which will compile 'offers and asks' to clearly articulate opportunities for the area's development, examples of new inter-local authority links being made outside of Berkshire, partners from town councils being involved in town centre master planning work, and that the membership and remit of the Health & Wellbeing Board and its subgroups were being refreshed to encourage greater partner participation. The peer

team also heard that a strategic Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector has been developed and agreed.

The Devolution White Paper will significantly impact the Council's long-term role in place leadership. During the Progress Review it was clear to the peer team that the Council is keen to engage in Strategic Authority discussions and wants to play a key role in developing proposals. There was also recognition that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) may also be a factor for the council to consider. The peer team felt that it was important that the council thinks carefully about the opportunities and implications of both devolution and potential LGR, but these topics should not distract members and officers from taking difficult decisions and delivering change at pace now.

Governance and Culture

The Corporate Peer Challenge urged the Council to simplify the governance structure to increase pace and agility. Linked to this, the Council was recommended to ensure that strategic legal, HR, communications and transformation expertise has a place at the 'top table' in a meaningful way and at the right point of policy development and delivery. The peer team heard during the Progress Review that a review of governance has taken place, drawing on examples of approaches used elsewhere. The Council explained that the new arrangements represent a more streamlined internal governance approach, removing delivery boards and centralising corporate activity, and clarifying arrangements for HR, Legal and Finance to sign off reports. It was intended that this would improve information sharing and management of corporate programmes within the SLT, and ensure wider inclusion of key staff, e.g. communications and project management. The peer team could see that this work has been helpful, though flagged that the new arrangements had only been implemented from December 2024 and needed to bed in. Conversations with staff during the Progress Review highlighted gaps in understanding of the new governance framework, what was new, and what it meant for how they undertook their roles. There is a need to build understanding across the organisation of the new arrangements.

It was positive to see that new arrangements sought to include key staff more widely

in important discussions. The peer team would recommend that this be developed further by putting in place a culture of co-production – including staff and key corporate officers early to shape new ways of working. There would be benefits for the Council by extending opportunities for co-production with external partners too.

Financial Planning and Management

With regard to the local authority's finances, the Corporate Peer Challenge stressed that the Council urgently needed to address overspending in children's and adult services and build reserves, and develop a clear plan that had buy-in from the whole organisation.

The Council reported that since the Corporate Peer Challenge it had made progress in understanding the financial challenge it faces and communicating this to the organisation, as well as developing a plan to address these challenges. However, since February 2024 the Council's financial position has become even more challenging and the in-year position remains acute, with rising demand for services and overspending particularly in housing, home to school transport, and social care unit costs. Furthermore, the increasing SEND deficit in the High Needs Block has placed significant pressure on the capital financing budget, and reserves have reduced further. Though the Council reports that it has achieved over £14 million of savings, and more than 80% of planned savings are likely to be achieved by the end of Q2, this will be insufficient. At the time of the Progress Review the Council was in active discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) about a request for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). At the time of writing this report, MHCLG has agreed to this in principle

During the Progress Review, the peer team also heard that the Council continues to build relationships with its new auditor, KPMG. Draft financial statements were provided in line with the end of May deadline for the second year running, and KPMG has undertaken significant audit work during 2024, which is a much-improved position. The Council also flagged that although previous auditors issued disclaimed opinions for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years, KPMG is expected to issue a disclaimed opinion for 2023-24 as well. The Value for Money (VfM) work from KPMG is ongoing, with significant weaknesses likely to be highlighted in respect of financial

resilience.

The peer team remains of the view that there is a need for a whole organisation approach to tackling the financial challenge, at all levels of the council. Though all staff the peer team spoke to appeared to understand the scale of the challenge facing the council and the need to contribute to delivering solutions, some staff felt that they had heard mixed messages from senior management and members about the need to reduce spend, but without any reduction in expectations for volume or quality of delivery. The tight financial position has not improved and the application for EFS does not signal that a solution has been identified. The peer team recognised that the product of the ongoing work to rationalise Council priorities had yet to be agreed and communicated to staff – though this was imminent – and that this clarity may help to address this issue.

The peer team raised with the council the need to communicate clearly with residents on the financial challenges facing the council and highlighted opportunities such as the new resident newsletter to provide context to explain difficult decisions the council may need to make. There remains a risk that those difficult decisions are not yet owned by all officers and members across the authority.

Capacity for Improvement

The Corporate Peer Challenge stressed that transformation needed to be embedded across the organisation with strong leadership from the political leadership, CLT, and an empowered central team to drive and enable transformation activity. The peer team also recommended that the transformation programme needed to be bolder to help ensure that the council can get a grip of finances, particularly the overspends in children's and adult services, and home to school transport. During the Progress Review, the peer team heard that the small transformation team has projected £3m of tangible savings for the council. For example, at the time of the Progress Review, the Council was in the process of outsourcing two of its three adult social care homes (projected to deliver more resilient services, providing significant savings of £976k and cost avoidance of £1.5m). The peer team also heard about work to repurpose a previous care home into 23 temporary accommodation units (delivering savings of £150k and cost avoidance of current additional housing costs of £600k), and

converting some of the accommodation into 'family time' provision for children's social care (reducing the cost of hired external facilities by £0.1m and providing a more permanent and better location for this service). The peer team heard that transformation resources across the council are due to be consolidated, and that this will provide scope for expansion of scale and impact of transformation activity, and agreed that opportunities for centralisation of some services would also enable greater join up and consistency. A more ambitious transformation programme will be necessary to create capacity for improvement in light of the difficult financial position

The peer team was also pleased to see that the Council was taking up opportunities to lever in additional capacity and challenge on areas for improvement, for example LGA support around IT and digital (including a digital 360 review), a LGA adult social care leadership review, support for the Health & Well-being Board from Partners in Care and Health, and an LGA children's services peer challenge.

The peer team heard that in response to their recommendations in the Corporate Peer Challenge, the Executive has approved a new risk management strategy with a revised risk appetite, bringing greater clarity that the Council is now more open to risk. It was noted that this will be embedded in 2025 through officer training and ensuring that this changed risk appetite is reflected in how the Council operates.

The peer team was informed that the Council remains committed to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and that senior management are keen to model this commitment in their behaviour. New EDI training has been rolled out through the Council's new HR system, and this has been well received. The gender balance of the Council's senior leadership team has changed significantly from 15:2 male to female in 2019 to 5:11 now. Similarly, the Executive is much more reflective of the wider population, with a gender balance ratio of 6:4 compared to 7:2 at the 2019 peer review. The peer team was of the view that this is a good start and would encourage the council to consider EDI in its widest context now one of the basics has been improved.

The Corporate Peer Challenge recommended that Executive members should continue the good work they had evidenced of how they were settling into their new roles, by taking up opportunities to develop their skills, and owning and leading their

portfolios to ensure effective political leadership for the council. During the Progress Review, the peer team heard that the Council remains fully committed to enhancing member development and that a number of Executive members had been supported to take part in LGA-led courses in recent months, and the chair of the Scrutiny Commission had been able to attend a Centre for Governance and Scrutiny course. This senior member engagement in learning and development is positive and should be encouraged further.

It was also positive to hear that the Council is rolling out an officer leadership development programme in 2025, starting with the SLT and then extending to the Leadership Forum.

Work to strengthen communications and engagement activity has included publicising consultation responses externally using the 'You said, we did' approach to closing the consultation loop, reviewing the consultation toolkit, and increased senior corporate involvement in communications planning. A Residents Survey is planned for Summer 2025.

In response to the Corporate Peer Challenge's recommendation to test the extent to which the behaviour framework has been embedded within the organisation, the council has undertaken an Employee Engagement Survey to provide a rich set of feedback to inform future staff communication and engagement. Feedback from staff interviewed during the Progress Review acknowledged that the Council undertakes a lot of communication activity, but highlighted a need to consider tailoring the activity further to meet needs of staff with different working patterns. There was also a suggestion that some information gets blocked due to gaps in the structure, and some staff don't feel engaged or feel that they know what is going on. It would be helpful to consider how these points can be addressed as part of the wider work in this area.

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The Corporate Peer Challenge recommended that the Council needed to ensure that there is traction on the delivery of the Delivering Better Value SEND programme and have a plan to resolve the High Needs Block Deficit.

During the Progress Review, the peer team heard that since the Corporate Peer Challenge a range of activity has taken place: A SEND Self Evaluation has been completed, a revised SEND and Inclusion Strategy has been agreed, a Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) has been appointed, and a SEND Strategic Improvement Board has brought together partners to address the challenges facing the partnership. The peer team recognised particular challenges with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) and noted that the Council was actively working with neighbouring councils to challenge the BOB ICB to ensure consistency of offer and approach across the ICB footprint, for example to influence BOB ICB neurodiversity pathways.


It was clear that SEND sufficiency continues to be a challenge. The Council has completed a SEND sufficiency exercise with a plan for short- and longer-term solutions to address the availability of placements. As mentioned above, the High Needs Block deficit continues to represent a significant challenge for the Council.

There was strong recognition across the peer team of the challenges in this area and they acknowledged that there were encouraging early steps to address these. The peer team also felt that the Council has made good use of the money and capacity that comes via the Delivering Better Value support programme.

The Council anticipates both an ILACS inspection and a SEND inspection in 2025. The peer team also heard that there has been a marked increase in the quantity and quality of children's and education service information shared with the Corporate Board and the Council's Executive Members in order to support greater corporate knowledge and ownership of the strengths and weaknesses across Children's Services and make improvements. This has also been complemented by enhanced reporting to the Scrutiny Commission.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank West Berkshire Council for undertaking a CPC Progress Review. We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation



wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Mona Sehgal, Principal Adviser for the South East, is the main point of contact between the authority and the LGA and her e-mail address is mona.sehgal@local.gov.uk.

No.	Recommendations	Actions	Timescale / Status	Governance
A. Peer Challenge Theme: Local priorities and outcomes				
1.	Key recommendation: Give greater clarity regarding priorities and focus on things that will make the most difference and that can be delivered within the council's financial envelope and capacity. This will involve deprioritising things.	<p>Review of the Council Strategy Delivery Plan for 2024/25 and beyond to strengthen prioritisation (Gold, Business as usual, deprioritised areas).</p> <p>See paper due for Executive in February 2025</p> <p>Re-develop the prioritisation tool to allow consistent classification of projects</p> <p>Tool being developed further</p> <p>Mid Term refresh of the Council Strategy (review priorities)</p> <p>Complete and fed into the paper for Executive of the 'top 20' priorities</p> <p>Rationalise number of strategies and KPIs</p> <p>KPIs significantly reduced. Strategy review due to C Board on 6th January</p> <p>Review of Council's Capital Programme to align with reviewed priorities</p> <p>Full Review of capital programme at Budget and significantly revised</p>	<p>Sep 2024 Annually Complete</p> <p>Jul 2025 In progress</p> <p>Mar 2025 Complete May 25</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete</p> <p>Oct 2024 Complete</p>	<p>Executive (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole/Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>Council (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Council (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>(Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p>

		<p>Refresh approach to internal communications to ensure that corporate priorities are universally understood</p> <p>Internal comms survey complete and 'Lets chat' pulse survey. Revised approach to Let's Chat Relaunched Leadership Forum Interim CEO updates Introduction of 'top ten' measures for staff to have full access to All Directorate sessions delivered by EDs to reinforce corporate priorities and share corporate news</p>	Sep 2024 Complete	Corporate Board (Joseph Holmes)
B. Peer Challenge Theme: Organisational and place leadership				
2.	<p>Key recommendation: Executive members should continue the good work settling into their new roles, taking up opportunities to develop their skills, and owning and leading their portfolios to ensure effective political leadership for the council.</p>	<p>Member Development Programme approved by Council (May 2024) and delivered during 2024/25. Further member briefings on specific services and issues to be delivered.</p> <p>Seek out opportunities to build policy knowledge, develop skills and glean good practice through networking (including through dedicated time at Away Days)</p> <p>Members to be provided with details of learning and development support they can access including training and networking offered by the LGA</p> <p>Complete and many members of the Executive undertaking LGA training. Chair of Scrutiny attending CPFS training event.</p> <p>Plan an annual programme of Strategy Boards on items which will impact priorities</p>	<p>Mar 2025 Complete</p> <p>Ongoing Complete</p> <p>Ongoing Complete</p> <p>Sep 2024 Ongoing</p>	<p>Council (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p>

3.	<p>Key recommendation: Invest time to strengthen relationships and ensure that the newly formed CLT are equipped as an effective senior officer leadership team to provide clear and consistent direction and stewardship for the organisation. This should be an ongoing area of work. Similarly, create more space for the Executive and CLT to jointly develop as a 'Top Team' to reinforce close working relationships and trust. Now that you have a permanent CLT in place, urgently stabilise the leadership below executive director level.</p>	<p>Reinstate bi-monthly Executive/SLT meetings</p> <p>Full change – established 4 weekly cycle of CB / SLT / CB / ELT and communicated</p> <p>Make permanent appointments to relevant Service Director posts</p> <p>Plan opportunities for team building/leadership development for Senior Leadership Team, including workshops offered by the LGA for both Officers and Members</p> <p>Complete for Jan/Feb 25.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete – ongoing</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete</p>	<p>SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Executive (Jeff Brooks/ Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p>
4.	<p>Key recommendation: Build on strong and positive operational relationships between the council and partners, including contractors, and develop strategic relationships that create opportunities to deliver activity that will support wider council and partner objectives (e.g. apprenticeships, social value). As part of this, develop a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p>	<p>Jointly compile 'offers and asks' to clearly articulate opportunities for the district's development Vision 2050</p> <p>Opportunity through Vision 2050 – ToR being drafted</p> <p>Refresh membership and remit of the Health & Wellbeing Board and its subgroups to encourage greater partner participation MP review with LGA</p> <p>Develop a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with the Voluntary and Community Sector, co-produced with Newbury Volunteer Centre</p> <p>Complete – see Executive paper</p> <p>Co-design Scrutiny Committee's work programme to focus on shared objectives</p>	<p>May 2025 In progress</p> <p>Dec 2024 In progress</p> <p>Jan 2025 Complete</p> <p>Jan 2025 Ongoing</p>	<p>SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/ Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>HWBB (Heather Codling/Matt Pearce)</p> <p>Building Communities Together (Patrick Clark/Paul Coe)</p> <p>Scrutiny Commission</p>

		<p>Play a shaping role in the Berkshire Prosperity Board and devolution discussions</p> <p>Range of discussions – Leader is the business board representative of the leader’s group</p> <p>Explore opportunities to form inter-local authority links outside of Berkshire</p> <p>Regional fostering hub and regional care co-operative network; waste mngt. Transport Contract Renewal at Berkshire level and Hampshire discussion. Representation through the LGA on peer reviews, national groups and networks. See preventative work with CIPFA, Merton and other Councils.</p> <p>Involve partners in town centre master planning work _</p> <p>Ongoing work with Newbury and Hungerford Town Council. Liaison with Thatcham TC.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>(Carolyn Culver/Jospeh Holmes)</p> <p>Place Directorate (Nigel Foot/Clare Lawrence)</p> <p>Executive/Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Place Directorate (Nigel Foot/Clare Lawrence)</p>
C. Peer Challenge Theme: Governance and culture				
5.	<p>Key recommendation: Simplify the governance structure to increase pace and agility.</p>	<p>Review the new Governance approach</p> <p>Implemented from December 2024 – greatly simplified</p> <p>Liaise with other Chief Executives to compare with their authorities’ governance models.</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Sep 2024 Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p>

		Refresh guidance and training to assist with understanding of governance arrangements for officers – Good governance / report writing training delivered July/Aug – completed in Nov.	Sep 2024 Complete	Statutory Officers (Joseph Holmes / Sarah Clarke/Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)
6.	Key recommendation: Ensure that strategic legal, HR, communications and transformation expertise has a place at the ‘top table’ in a meaningful way and at the right point of policy development and delivery.	<p>Implement arrangements for HR, Legal and Finance to sign off reports prior to access to Corporate Board. – see governance review</p> <p>Corporate Board to meet more frequently, fortnightly complete – see above</p> <p>Key officers invited to new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings as required – see revised governance paper</p>	<p>Oct 2024 Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Corporate Board/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Senior Leadership Team (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Senior Leadership Team (Jeff Brooks/Jospeh Holmes)</p>
7.	Key recommendation: Test the extent to which the behaviour framework has been embedded within the organisation (e.g. through staff survey/ pulse survey).	<p>Pulse surveys to be undertaken every six months</p> <p>Will be undertaken post EES</p> <p>Employee Attitude Survey to be undertaken every three years</p> <p>Complete – awaiting results</p> <p>Roll out amended appraisal process and performance management framework</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Produce an action plan based on the feedback to the Employee Value Proposition Survey and engagement through Let’s Chat</p>	<p>Commenced and ongoing</p> <p>Autumn 2024 Complete</p> <p>Oct 2024 Complete</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete</p>	<p>Human Resources (Jeff Brooks / Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Human Resources (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes)</p>

		To be completed – new employee group to be set up representing the whole of WBC		
D. Peer Challenge Component: Financial planning and management				
8.	<p>Key recommendation: Urgently address overspending in children's and adult services and build reserves, develop a clear plan that has buy-in from the whole organisation.</p>	<p>Develop a new approach for future Council budgeting for 2025-26 and beyond (ABB, star chamber and prioritisation)</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>Increase level of reserves above the minimum level required in the MTFS.</p> <p>Not delivered – likely to remain significantly low post LGFS – ongoing discussion with MHCLG</p> <p>Savings monitoring will commence from month 1 to ensure services are on track to deliver a break even position</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Introduce Star Chamber review process for in-year pressures</p> <p>Complete – has not delivered a break-even position though pressures better understood and mitigations put in place</p> <p>Refresh internal communications approach to facilitate pan-organisational understanding of financial position</p> <p>Communication occurred and is ongoing across range of comms channels</p> <p>Introduce training for budget managers</p> <p>Complete for this year but ongoing</p>	<p>Mar 2025 – In progress June 2025</p> <p>May 2025</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Commenced Complete</p> <p>Sept 2024 Complete and ongoing</p> <p>Complete but ongoing</p>	<p>Budget Board (Iain Cottingham / Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Budget Board (Iain Cottingham / Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Star Chamber (Iain Cottingham / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)</p> <p>Executive (Iain Cottingham / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Finance (Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)</p>

E. Peer Challenge Component: Capacity for improvement				
9.	<p>Key recommendation: Transformation needs to be embedded across the organisation with strong leadership from the political leadership, CLT, and an empowered central team to drive and enable transformation activity. Linked to this, the transformation programme needs to be bolder to help ensure that the council can get a grip of finances, particularly the overspends in children's and adult services, and home to school transport.</p>	<p>Ensure clear visibility of all transformation-focussed projects through Transformation & Corporate Programme Board – revised reporting developed – working with Local Partnerships programme in Dec. 2024.</p> <p>Proceed with the implementation of the Business Support Review and centralisation of support services including project management resource</p> <p>Underway – opportunities developed – restructure to consult from Jan. 25</p> <p>Further transformation opportunities to be identified linked to areas of high spend or poor performance TVI work from November – highlighted opportunity of £4m. Decision due on selected opportunities in June.</p> <p>Develop prevention strategy in collaboration with Health partners DASS co-ordination across BOB ICS; DASS chairs SE mental health network; West Berkshire is one of 3 Councils involved in forthcoming CIPFA preventative study</p>	<p>Aug 2024 Complete</p> <p>Sep 2025 Work in progress and ongoing</p> <p>Jun 2025 Work in progress and ongoing</p> <p>Dec 2024 In progress</p>	<p>Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole /Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke/Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole /Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>HWBB (Heather Codling/Matt Pearce)</p>
10.	<p>Key recommendation: Strengthen communications and engagement activity further, by using internal communications expertise earlier in project planning, closing the communications loop via consistent feedback on outcomes of consultations, and embedding approaches that engage wider groups of people earlier in the process and in more meaningful ways.</p>	<p>Publicise consultation responses externally to close the loop (You said, we did)</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Review consultations toolkit to include a mechanism to notify residents when results of consultations have been published (e.g. through the newsletter)</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Complete and ongoing</p> <p>Nov 2024 Complete</p>	<p>Consultation Team (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/ Sarah Clarke)</p>

		<p>Chief Executive to be involved in Comms briefings with the Leader</p> <p>Complete – interim CEO has fortnightly meetings. Comms rep on SLT and ELT</p> <p>Chief Executive to attend the Communications Steering Group</p> <p>Revised – see above</p> <p>Undertake regular representative Residents Survey</p> <p>Will be developed for 2025 in house</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Jun 2025 In progress</p>	<p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Consultation Team (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p>
F. Peer Challenge Component: Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)				
11.	<p>Key recommendation: Ensure that there is traction on the delivery of the Delivering Better Value SEND programme and have a plan to resolve the High Needs Block Deficit.</p>	<p>Co-produce a SEND and Inclusion Strategy and an Alternative Provision Strategy</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Establish a DSCO (Designated Social Care Officer)</p> <p>Establish a strategic Local Area Improvement Partnership for SEND and Alternate Provision (AP)</p> <p>Regular reports will be provided to Corporate Board.</p> <p>Complete – coming to CBoard</p> <p>The activity of the programme will be overseen by scrutiny as agreed with Chair.</p> <p>Regular updates to Scrutiny taking place</p>	<p>Sep 2024 Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Apr 2025</p> <p>Quarterly Complete</p> <p>Jun / Dec each year</p>	<p>SEND Strategic Improvement Board (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>Strategic SEND Improvement Board (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>Corporate Board</p> <p>Scrutiny Commission (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p>

		<p>Heads Funding Group (sub-group of the Schools Forum) complete a 7-year deficit recovery plan between LA Finance/Children's Services Colleagues with school leaders.</p> <p>Review all High Needs Block existing spend</p> <p>Appoint a Delivering Better Value Programme Lead Organise assistance from the LGA SEND adviser</p>	<p>May 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Schools Forum (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>SEND Strategic Improvement Board (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p>
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LGA Peer Review – Children’s Safeguarding

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	22 May 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Rebecca Wilshire
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4688

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report is to share the feedback, findings and recommendation from a recent LGA Peer Review in Children’s Services.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Executive
- 2.2 Review the report written by the LGA peer review team and give due consideration to areas for action (recommendations) whilst also acknowledging areas of strength in the Family safeguarding Service.
- 2.3 Share the LGA Peer Review Report with the relevant scrutiny committee to explore next steps in the ongoing development of children’s social care.
- 2.4 Agree to the West Berkshire Council publication of the LGA report in line with the standing agreement with the LGA following the conclusion of a peer review.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial	<p>There are no financial implications in this report, the report is feeding back the findings from a recent LGA Peer Review</p> <p>However, some recommendations may require financial support, and this would be explored further if needed as some area will be addressed within the Transformation Funding already agreed.</p>
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications in this report

Legal:	There are no legal implications in this report			
Risk Management:	There are no risk management implications in this report			
Property:	There are no property implications in this report			
Policy:				
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There is no impact on equalities within this report. The report and its attachments are intended to feedback on a recent LGA Peer Review
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		There is no environment impact from report
Health Impact:		X		There is no health impact from this report
ICT Impact:		X		There are no ICT implications with this report

Digital Services Impact:		x		
Council Strategy Priorities:		X		This report supports Council Priorities: 1) Services we are proud of 2) Fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all
Core Business:	X			The findings of the LGA Peer Review fully support core business relating to the safeguarding of children.
Data Impact:		X		There is no data impact.
Consultation and Engagement:	The LGA Peer Review engaged with a variety of practitioners, social workers and partners. The review also included the engagement of children and families across the family safeguarding service.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 Over the last 18 months there have been issues raised relating to social work and management practice. These concerns relate to the application and fulfilment of statutory duties. Changes in leadership and management, building a culture across the family safeguarding service based on high support, high challenge and high expectations have started to take effect. The LGA Peer Review was deemed the most suitable option for external review at this time.
- 4.2 West Berkshire Council requested a LGA Peer Review on their Family Safeguarding Service to take place in early 2025. The rationale for this was to ensure we have the correct safeguards in place for children and families and to explore any areas of weakness or gaps there may be.
- 4.3 Many areas of children’s services are under regular and rigorous scrutiny. This takes many forms including quality assurance auditing, focussed visits from Ofsted, small scale inspection activity, internal audit and multi-agency audit. We consider we know ourselves well and this activity informs our twice-yearly Self Evaluation update.

- 4.4 The final report from the LGA covers in detail the strengths and areas for improvement across the family safeguarding service. It also provides prompts for reflection in the leadership and management of the service.

5 Background Information

- 5.1 Over the past 18 months, there has been a focus on Children in Care, Care Leavers (Focus visit from Ofsted), the Front Door (Southeast Sector Led Improvement), and Children with Disability who from January - March 2025 had an independent audit of children’s files due to concerns raised in this area. Therefore, the area of focus for the LGA was to Family Safeguarding Teams.
- 5.2 West Berkshire Council are currently within the Ofsted Inspection window for a full children’s social care inspection. The LGA peer review provided much needed insight and opportunity to prepare for the Ofsted inspection as the format for individual social work interviews and children’s case reviews was based upon the operating model of an Ofsted inspection.
- 5.3 In partnership with the LGA Children’s Services designed the Key Lines of Enquiry.
- 5.4 **Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)**
- (a) Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model is being utilised to its full potential
 - (b) Is there evidence of Management Oversight, Case Supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout
 - (c) Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm
 - (d) Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs
 - (e) Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?
- 5.5 The Feedback Letter (Appendix 2) provides the full detail of their findings.
- 5.6 The peer review made a series of recommendations that will be progressed and overseen by the Children’s Social Care Performance and Quality Assurance Board chaired by the Service Director for Children’s Social Care.

6 Proposals/Recommendations

- 6.1 **Recommendation 1: Clarify and strengthen the governance and delivery arrangements for early help with partners**
- (a) Early help is a key area to be developed to ensure a positive impact on the numbers of children in need, child protection plans and the stability to deliver the family safeguarding model. Addressing the strategy, action plan, and partnership buy-in as a priority is necessary to ensure that the impact is clearly demonstrated.

6.2 Use governance structures to develop resilience; not just a one council approach, a whole West Berkshire approach.

- (a) Ensure full engagement from the integrated care board (ICB) to shared priorities, actions and possibly funding. A partnership rich, strategic SEND board could be put in place to map out joint commissioning work as well as the development of shared priorities related to health, SEND and voluntary services support. A review of Education Partnership arrangements may be prudent to explore a forum to agree joint endeavours between schools and the local authority outside of statutory and school led forums. Agreements need to be in place for complex needs with a shared commitment to partnership solutions and shared funding agreements.

6.3 Review governance and programme management arrangements:

- (a) There are a number of initiatives being taken forward at the same time, including workforce development, the embedding of the family safeguarding model and the child in need pilot (CiN). Determine which areas of work are priorities at any one moment. Ensure that attention is given to these and outcomes achieved against defined strategic objectives, so that focus can then shift to another area.

6.4 Undertake a desktop review of children missing education.

- (a) Consider commissioning an independent and external review of existing practices and governance arrangements so you are satisfied that they are fit for purpose.

6.5 Review the SEF to fully reflect achievements, developments and future direction.

- (a) The current SEF document does not provide a full and evidenced portrait of the challenges for children and their families in West Berkshire - and how these are being addressed. There is a clear self-awareness within the service that is not fully replicated in the SEF, which should be redrafted as a priority.

7 Other options considered.

- 7.1 No other options considered at this stage

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This report it to share with Snr Leaders the outcome of the LGA Peer Review which took place in January 2025.
- 8.2 There are many positives within this, and it demonstrates the hard work which has taken place over the last 18 months to address practice issues, safeguarding children and build a service we can all be proud off.
- 8.3 There is still work to do, we know what this is and what we need to do to achieve it, the timescales are urgent as we are anticipating our next inspection soon.
- 8.4 This briefing aims to ensure that Senior Leaders are well informed and committed to overseeing continuous improvement in children's services.

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 – LGA Peer Review Slides

Appendix 2 – LGA Peer Review Feedback Letter

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:

Name: Rebecca Wilshire

Job Title: Service Director

West Berkshire Council Peer Challenge

Feedback from the peer challenge team
Peer challenge 28-31 January 2025

Presentation: 31 January 2025



The peer challenge team

- DCS lead peer - Stephen Kitchman, LB Bexley
- Social care peer - Warren Petitjean, Newcastle
- Social care peer - Oluwatoyin Akinrinlade, Hertfordshire
- Education peer - Eddie Huntington, AD Education, Stockton
- LGA Peer challenge manager - Jonathan Trubshaw



The purpose of peer challenge

- Provides councils and partners with an external view on the effectiveness of the strategic response and the quality of practice.
- Conducted in an open and honest manner that jointly identifies strengths & areas for consideration.
- Provides feedback based on a brief engagement with the Council and partners.



The process of peer challenge

- Peers reviewed a range of information to ensure we were familiar with the council, the challenges it is facing and its plans for the future
- The peer team gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to further research
- We spoke to more than 75 people including a range of council staff together with families, lead member and external stakeholders

Scope and brief for the peer challenge (Key Lines of Enquiry)

1. Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model is being utilised to its full potential
2. Is there evidence of Management Oversight, Case Supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout
3. Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm
4. Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs
5. Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?



Overall messages and observations - 1

- Appetite and enthusiasm for change – need for prioritisation
- The workforce is enthusiastic, committed and connected in working for West Berkshire and their families
- Leadership and management have a clear focus and are working towards improving quality of social work and education practice
- Strong political and corporate support for children's services
- Good operational relationships



Overall messages and observations - 2

- Operationally strong, needs greater strategic focus and informed challenge
- Limited evidence of partnership governance arrangements and impact
- Social workers and managers' case loads and workplace demands are high
- High levels of activity to find ingenious solutions to meet the needs of West Berkshire's children in the absence of clear partnership strategies

What people have said to us

CiN overlooked
sometimes because of
the high case loads
(Manager)

I love working here
(Social worker)

The SW is amazing in
my life, changed things
around
(Parent)

I asked CSC for
help, they listened,
they took things on
board and helped
my family
(Parent)

SW listens...I like this
SW
(9 yr child)

We are people who see
children as their focus
and make it work as
children are at our hart
(Education)

Some of the best work I
have done is with fathers
(Practitioner)

We're getting there, we
just need to keep going
(Snr manager)

No school is at risk of
slipping through a
safeguarding gap
(Head teacher)

Something we are
developing
(Social worker)

CP Chairs don't always
listen
(Non-SW professional)

Evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model utilised to full potential

Strengths

- FSM is an appropriate model for West Berkshire to adopt
- Investment in training is seen as positive by staff
- FSM working well in some of the children's files seen
- Recruitment of some multi-agency staff to implement the model
- Staff are enthusiastic for the model
- Connected with a FSM community of practice



Evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model utilised to full potential

Areas for consideration

- FSM strategic oversight is unclear – no evident evaluation schedule with clear project plan and milestones
- High case loads are impacting on the implementation of the model
- Inconsistent application by social workers – fidelity to the model
- Interventions not always analysed for impact
- No overall impact data
- Cultural genograms not evidenced

Evidence of management oversight, case supervision - child's voice throughout

Strengths

- Data reports on the frequency of supervision
- Supervision recorded in case files
- FSM seen in the structure of supervision
- Commitment and evidence of clear child's voice and family feedback
- Supportive and responsive leadership and management team
- Staff report feeling safe in their work



Evidence of management oversight, case supervision - child's voice throughout

Areas for consideration

- Most supervision, evidenced from files, was task orientated with limited reflection
- Limited specificity of actions, expectations and timescales
- No clearly articulated system for ensuring child/family feedback and quality assurance that activity leads to changes in practice
- Commitment to auditing files not being fully realised





Evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm

Strengths

- Positive feedback from partners on the immediate safety of children
- Evidence from majority of files that appropriate decisions are taken and recorded
- Children seen in a timely manner
- Management is available and accessible
- Co-location of all children's services helps with support and decision making



Evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm

Areas for consideration

- Timeliness of implementation of decisions
- Limited evidence of reflective supervision
- Limited evidence of partner involvement in group supervision
- Management oversight of CiN plans
- High percentage of s47 enquiries not requiring ICPC



Evidence of child protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs

Strengths

- Permanent, stable and experienced team
- Chairs have pre-meetings with social care team
- Conferences are well chaired
- Chairs actively looking to include parents and child's voice
- Evidence of appropriate escalation by CP chairs



Evidence of child protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs

Areas for consideration

- Engagement of fathers
- Plans are long and contain a high number of actions
- Conversion to plan is low – high use of resource in preparations
- Capacity of CP chairs and IROs
- Conference and review timeliness/repeat CP plans





Evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education

Strengths

- Individual agencies are aware of statutory requirements
- Partnership working between SEN and children's social care is developing
- Schools met are confident that there is oversight of children not in FTEd
- Evidence of Youth Justice effective practice with children not in FTEd
- Alternative provision works effectively in most cases

Evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education

Areas for consideration

- Role of virtual school is not fully developed
- No clear evidence of strategic oversight for children not in FTED



Recommendations - 1

1. Clarify and strengthen the governance and delivery arrangements for early help with partners
2. Use governance structures to develop resilience; not just a one council approach, a whole West Berkshire approach
3. Review governance and programme management arrangements:
 1. Mosaic
 2. Workforce development
 3. Family Safeguarding Model



Recommendations - 2

4. Review and evaluate the CiN pilot to determine how this is taken forward
5. Undertake a desktop review of children missing education
6. Review the SEF to fully reflect achievements, developments and future direction

Children's Services Peer Challenge

West Berkshire Council

28-31 January 2025

Feedback report





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1. Executive summary

The appetite and enthusiasm for change in West Berkshire is clear from all the people the peer team spoke with. It is also clear that the workforce is committed and well connected within their communities. Work is being undertaken in a number of change projects and there is now a need for prioritisation to ensure that each element is planned, delivered and appropriately supported to achieve the desired outcomes.

Leadership and management have a clear focus and are working towards improving quality of social work and education practice. There is a clear understanding of the crossover and co-dependency within children's services, which is beginning to bring benefits for children and their families.

There is strong political and corporate support for children's services. The lead member is passionate and informed about the service and what it is trying to achieve. The authority is facing high levels of financial uncertainty and within this very challenging environment the Council has ensured that children are prioritised.

There are good operational relationships, both within children's services and with partner organisations, that are used to ensure services are delivered. However, frontline effectiveness needs to be matched with greater strategic focus and alignment, so that collective effort is being directed where it is most needed to deliver the agreed outcomes.

The 'golden thread' connecting frontline practice, through service plans to directorate and corporate objectives was underdeveloped. There was little evidence of informed challenge to ensure that projects are monitored, with a clear understanding of milestones, delivery, resources and timescale.

There is partnership oversight at a high level from police, ICB and the Children's Safeguarding Partnership. However, it was less clear how this translated to priorities at a West Berkshire level and how the shared endeavour was being delivered jointly with partners. There was limited evidence of partnership governance arrangements and impact monitoring at a local level. Partners could not articulate what for them was specifically a West Berkshire priority.

There is a clear recognition that social workers and managers' caseloads are too

high. Recruitment and development programmes are in place with the aim of bringing these down. However, these will take time to reduce caseloads to the preferred levels and in the meantime workplace demands are high. Managers are multi-tasking, leading on operational and strategic work whilst also being the main delivery agent on some of the projects.

There are clearly high levels of activity. In the absence of clear partnership strategies people are finding work arounds and ingenious solutions to meet the needs of West Berkshire's children.

2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

2.1 Clarify and strengthen the governance and delivery arrangements for early help with partners

Early help is a key area to be developed to ensure a positive impact on the numbers of children in need, child protection plans and the stability to deliver the family safeguarding model. Addressing the strategy, action plan, and partnership buy-in as a priority is necessary to ensure that the impact is clearly demonstrated.

2.2 Use governance structures to develop resilience; not just a one council approach, a whole West Berkshire approach

Ensure full engagement from the integrated care board (ICB) to shared priorities, actions and possibly funding. A partnership rich, strategic SEND board could be put in place to map out joint commissioning work as well as the development of shared priorities related to health, SEND and voluntary services support. A review of Education Partnership arrangements may be prudent to explore a forum to agree joint endeavours between schools and the local authority outside of statutory and school led forums. Agreements need to be in place for complex needs with a shared commitment to partnership solutions and shared funding agreements.

2.3 Review governance and programme management arrangements

There are a number of initiatives being taken forward at the same time, including workforce development, the embedding of the family safeguarding model and the child in need pilot (CiN). Determine which areas of work are priorities at any one moment. Ensure that attention is given to these and outcomes achieved against defined strategic objectives, so that focus can then shift to another area.

2.4 Undertake a desktop review of children missing education

Consider commissioning an independent and external review of existing practices and governance arrangements so you are satisfied that they are fit for purpose.

2.5 Review the SEF to fully reflect achievements, developments and future direction

The current SEF document does not provide a full and evidenced portrait of the challenges for children and their families in West Berkshire - and how these are being addressed. There is a clear self-awareness within the service that is not fully replicated in the SEF, which should be redrafted as a priority.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Stephen Kitchman, Director of Children's Services, LB Bexley
- Warren Petitjean, Service Manager in Children's Social Care, Newcastle City Council
- Oluwatoyin Akinrinlade, Service Manager in Family Safeguarding Service (East), Hertfordshire County Council
- Eddie Huntington, Assistant Director Education, Inclusion and Achievement, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Jonathan Trubshaw, LGA Associate, Peer challenge manager

3.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following themes which form the core components of all Children's Services Peer Challenges:

1. Leadership and management, including vision and strategy
2. Effective practice and impact on outcomes for children and families
3. Resources and capacity – are leaders creating the right environment for good social work practice?

In addition to these questions, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on:

1. Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model is being utilised to its full potential
2. Is there evidence of Management Oversight, Case Supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout
3. Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm
4. Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs
5. Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?

3.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of children's services to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team

then spent 4 days onsite at West Berkshire, during which they:

- Reviewed 16 children's files
- Gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to more than 75 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.
- Obtained feedback from a number of families who currently access help and support from West Berkshire children's services, or families who recently no longer need help and support.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

4. Feedback

4.1 Leadership and management, including vision and strategy

There is clear and visible management and leadership support available to the staff. People interviewed said that managers are accessible and that there was a positive work culture.

The lead member is well informed on the issues for children's services and is passionate about the wellbeing of children and their families in West Berkshire. A clear dashboard of indicators would help in the effective challenge of the service. The use of data would also help the lead member to promote the achievements in children's service's, both inside the council and to partners.

Strategy and governance arrangements are not fully developed or utilised to effectively monitor progress. Detailed action plans, with clear milestones, are not always in place, so the informed use of resources cannot be objectively challenged. Evidence and data are currently held in numerous places, so that effective monitoring against milestones is not straightforward.

4.2 Effective practice and impact on outcomes for children and families

The peer team spoke with frontline practitioners who are clearly passionate about

working for West Berkshire and their children and families. People want to work for the council and have developed practical relationships with partner organisations to ensure solutions are found.

There is good practice evidenced in some of the case files reviewed, with evidence of family voice being gathered and recorded. Supervision was reported as taking place and recorded. More specific actions with allocated timescales are needed so that impact can be evidenced. Structured oversight and feedback are necessary to ensure activities meet strategic goals and facilitate learning.

As an example of good practice, the peer team observed a core group meeting which was well attended by relevant professionals. There is evidence that where possible, and age appropriate, the child attends their meeting and contributes to plan. The social worker was empathetic yet rightly challenged mother, whilst giving her a choice as to what support will help move the family forward. The multiagency network also rightly contributed, and collaboratively shared necessary actions - which all felt were achievable by the next meeting.

4.3 Resources and capacity – are leaders creating the right environment for good social work practice?

The Council acknowledges the resource challenges faced by children's services and there is corporate support available to address these issues.

There is strong evidence of some innovative work to recruit additional social workers, including maximising how the apprenticeship levy is used. Further consideration now needs to be given to wider workforce issues including wellness, so that the existing strong work on retention is famed and monitored within an overarching strategic framework. Multi-agency training and development, through the safeguarding partnership, appears to have been suspended. The workforce strategy should be brought forward as a priority and an annual training plan for children's social care implemented. The impact of learning and development could be monitored through the social work health-check - along with other workforce issues.

4.4 Is there evidence that the Family Safeguarding Model (FSM) is being utilised to its full potential?

In the peer team's view, the FSM is an appropriate model for West Berkshire to adopt. It aligns with and supports the council's goals. Partners are being included, and practices are being adjusted to align with the model.

The investment in training and the opportunities to train, were seen as positive by staff and there was evidence in some of the children's files seen that the FSM was working well with examples of impact included. There has also been recruitment of some multi-agency staff to implement the model, which is seen as beneficial for the ongoing development of the model.

Staff are enthusiastic for the model and West Berkshire is connected with a wider FSM community of practice that facilitates the ongoing learning, development and knowledge regarding the model.

There has recently been a relaunch of the model with training and drive to increase uptake. The specifics of the FSM's strategic oversight regarding what is being refreshed and the methods used are not clear. It would be beneficial to have an implementation plan with an evaluation schedule, including clear milestones and a plan to sustain developments. It is also important to be clear who is leading the strategy, holding partners to account and monitoring progress.

High caseloads are impacting on the implementation of the model. Evidence from the practitioners who the peer team met was that enthusiasm for FSM is high although workload constraints mean that they cannot implement all the elements that they would like to. Balancing caseloads would facilitate a more consistent application of the model by social workers and a stronger fidelity to the model would have a greater impact on outcomes for children and their families; the peer team is aware that this is understood and is a focus for senior leaders.

A dashboard for monitoring the effectiveness and impact of using the FSM would be helpful. Currently, interventions are not always analysed for impact. Bringing together selected existing data to provide overall impact would help to focus on areas of the model that need to be embedded and developed.

In the files seen by the peer team there was little evidence of cultural genograms. The broader system generated genograms were in files and these now need to be enhanced so that there is the right level of information presented to align with the right support.

Staff are growing in confidence in using Motivational Interviewing (MI) to work with children, young people and their parents to bring about sustainable changes. However, the use of Family Safeguarding Modules (programme designed to work with parents) is still in the infancy stage. The children services ICT system creates the modules as a tick box exercise and is linked to statutory visit instead of schedule of intervention completed with parent(s), stepparents for best outcomes for their children.

The peer team observed a group supervision with positive and appropriate involvement from relevant adults' workers. Key issues were identified, action agreed to provide a prompt response, and updates provided on progress. Overall, the evidence from supervision demonstrates the benefits of the family safeguarding model in providing effective services to children and their families.

4.5 Is there evidence of management oversight and case supervision, which is child led, and child centred and of good quality, with evidence of the child's voice throughout?

There are data reports on the frequency of supervision, and this is tracked by the performance board. Supervision is recorded in case files and there is evidence in the structure of supervision that the FSM is clearly being adopted.

The peer team was impressed by the evidence of clear child's voice and family feedback in the case files seen. The case files demonstrate a commitment to engaging with families and this was well recorded. The child's voice was also clearly present in the documentation from conference meetings, and this should be seen as positive practice.

However, there is no clearly articulated system for ensuring that the child/family feedback collected is comprehensively interrogated so that good practice is highlighted and learning is shared across the teams. A quality assurance system that identifies themes from children and families feedback and creates a programme of activities that systemically lead to influence and changes in practice would be of benefit.

Staff spoke positively about the work culture within West Berkshire, describing being

well supported by a responsive leadership and management team. Frontline workers said that there was a 'no blame' culture and that they felt safe to make decisions, which were well supported. Managers were available and accessible when needed for advice and guidance.

Most supervision, evidenced from the files seen, was task orientated with limited evidence of reflection. When reflective supervision is provided this needs to be recorded to demonstrate the breadth and depth of practice within West Berkshire.

For some of the task orientated supervision there was limited specificity regarding the actions identified, with unclear expectations as to what the outcomes should be or the timescales within which the actions need to be undertaken.

There is a strong commitment to auditing case files, reinforced by a quality assurance approach that prioritises learning. However, not all files identified for audit were seen within the timescale and there was no obvious mechanism for escalating or exempting files. This can result in trends being formulated on a smaller than ideal sample size.

4.6 Is there evidence of good decision making when children are considered to be at risk of harm?

A consistent observation from the peer team is that management, at both team and service levels, is available and accessible to all staff. Managers are present and approachable, allowing staff to confidently address issues. The co-location of all children's services provides advantages in support and decision-making processes.

The peer team received positive feedback from partners on the responsiveness of the service. When an immediate safety concern for children arose, managers and frontline staff handled the situation promptly and comprehensively. This means that children are seen, appropriate decisions are taken in line with procedures and that these are recorded in the case files.

Evidence from some internal partners suggested that the implementation of some, non-urgent, decisions took longer than was expected. There was also limited evidence of partner involvement in group supervision. This may be a limitation of the FSM templates and clarification is needed when recording the involvement of others

e.g. adult services.

Social workers appreciate that they are able to chair their own children in need (CiN) reviews and this was seen as evidence of managerial trust. However, when there is a decision for closure or step-down, additional managerial oversight – potentially from a different team – would provide increased rigour. Enhanced management oversight of plans may also help reduce rereferral rates.

Conference chairs hold a pre-meeting with social workers before a conference takes place. This routine step builds in a positive element of quality assurance. However, there appears to be a high percentage of s47 enquiries that go to an initial child protection case conference where a plan is then not made. Senior leaders provided a narrative behind these percentages, including a large sibling group in one family, if not supported on child protection plan at conference, affects the overall percentage. This may be an area that leaders wish to explore further to evidence narratives within data reports and thematic audit activity.

4.7 Is there evidence of Child Protection oversight from Child Protection Chairs?

There is a permanent, stable and experienced team of child protection (CP) chairs and this provides consistency in decision making. Conference chairs hold a pre-meeting with social workers before a conference takes place. This routine step builds in a positive element of quality assurance.

The conference chairs in conjunction with the social workers prioritise the need for the child's voice to be heard at conference. Age appropriately, children are invited to their conference, and they adopt the 'opt out' approach, promoting expectations of inclusion from the onset. Advocates are used appropriately to support children to amplify their voices in conference. The peer team found in one of the casefiles that they reviewed, a report completed by the child's advocate - voicing her views about mother's partners, her mother and her social worker and what she would like to see happen.

The conferences observed by the peer team were well chaired with the chairs

actively looking to include parents and children's voice.

There was evidence of appropriate escalation by the chairs. This was seen by the peer team during care reviews and confirmed during the focus discussion.

From the review undertaken of children's files, it was noted that there could have been more consistent engagement of fathers in the child protection process. Whilst noting this as a development area for many local authorities, the involvement of fathers and mother's partners appear to be limited to them attending a meeting and/or being present during home visits. Concerted efforts need to be made to explore the history of fathers/mother's partners and collaboratively agree on the right change work required resulting in best outcomes for children and young people.

Child protection plans are often very detailed and long, containing a high number of actions – sometimes with a list of sub-actions. The peer team understands that this issue is currently being considered, particularly how to appropriately reflect the involvement and concerns from the various members of the multi-disciplinary teams. Where practical, plans should be made with a focused actions that are easily understandable and achievable. This would help with the time spent monitoring, as one plan reviewed had over 30 actions listed.

The CP chairs also take on the role and responsibilities of independent reviewing officers (IROs). The peer team received some comments that caseloads were high and capacity may be an issue. Although the data suggests that caseloads appeared to be manageable this may be an issue to review, as well as an assessment of capacity to further support the case file auditing process.

Conference and review timeliness is low. The reasons as to why this is not at one hundred percent should be investigated and actions determined to address the issues. This should also apply to understanding the reasons for repeat CP plans and identifying the support that children and their families are accessing.

4.8 Is there evidence of children being safeguarded who are not in full time education?

There was evidence that the individual agencies are aware of the statutory requirements regarding children not in full time education (FTEd). Partnership

working between the whole of the education department – including special educational needs (SEN) - and children's social care is being strengthened further. Children's social care and education being on the same floor of the council's offices has helped people exchange information and work to a one council ethos.

The schools that met the peer team are confident that there is oversight of children not in FTEd. This was supported by evidence in some of the case files that social workers considered oversight to be in place. The head teachers showed that they were knowledgeable about their students and their situations. There was also good evidence of effective practice from the youth justice service with children not in FTEd, which is of particular importance given the level of exclusions and suspensions within the cohort.

Alternative provision was seen to work effectively in most cases. The iCollege appears to work well, with most children entering and leaving the provision as intended. There was an example of one child who had stayed longer in iCollege with no scope of next step in view. It is however noted that this is an exception rather than the norm.

The role of the virtual school, although not explored in depth, appears to offer potential for further enhancement of support for children in need. In line with the increased extended duties of the virtual school, there is greater freedom to develop this service to support the needs of those not in school or in part time education. Those working in the virtual school recognised this and are considering how the offer can be extended. Any developments should also include the strengthening of strategic oversight for children not in FTEd, including mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring that no children become stuck in the alternative provision. The links with key educational partners in schools along with more structured planning for support to understand and negotiate support towards re-integration rather than a permanent move out of school into another non-special school provision could include an enhanced training offer as well as challenge when moves are not in the child or young person's best interests. Where a move to a special school is needed this should follow direction from further multi agency decision making. In this way AP could be developed to support the young person and the school and not a shortcut to specialist provision. The challenge of the virtual school could be essential to its long-term success.



5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge and the LGAs Children's Improvement Adviser will also be in touch to discuss any further support that can be offered to support the implementation of recommendations in this report.

In the meantime, Mona Sehgal, Principal Adviser (mona.sehgal@local.gov.uk), and Helen Watson, Children's Improvement Adviser (helen.watson5@icloud.com) are the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association.

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Carers Strategy 2025-2028

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	22 May 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Patrick Clark
Report Author:	Hannah Cole
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4617

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek agreement to publish the Carers Strategy, which is a key document in setting out how the council will support carers in the district.
- 1.2 Carers make an invaluable contribution to the lives of people with care needs, often with significant impact on their own wellbeing and quality of life. In doing so, they reduce the burden on statutory services. Consequently, it is imperative that they receive appropriate support from the council.

2 Recommendation

That the attached Strategy is adopted.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary																				
Financial:	There are costs associated with the provision of services to carers. The adoption of this Strategy may lead to some increased costs (through encouraging carers to come forward and seek help); it is likely to lead to some reduced costs (by providing timely and preventative interventions to avoid carer breakdown). The net financial impacts are therefore complex and unpredictable.																				
	<table><tr><th>Service</th><th>Cost Centre</th><th>Cost Centre Description</th><th>Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £</th><th>Budget 2025/26 £</th></tr><tr><td>ASC</td><td>58102</td><td>Support to Carer Direct Payment</td><td>53,850</td><td>57,010</td></tr><tr><td>ASC</td><td>58103</td><td>Support to Other</td><td>558,120</td><td>541,180</td></tr><tr><td>ASC</td><td>58306</td><td>LDS Short Breaks Service</td><td>467,670</td><td>481,320</td></tr></table>	Service	Cost Centre	Cost Centre Description	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £	Budget 2025/26 £	ASC	58102	Support to Carer Direct Payment	53,850	57,010	ASC	58103	Support to Other	558,120	541,180	ASC	58306	LDS Short Breaks Service	467,670	481,320
Service	Cost Centre	Cost Centre Description	Forecast Outturn 2024/25 £	Budget 2025/26 £																	
ASC	58102	Support to Carer Direct Payment	53,850	57,010																	
ASC	58103	Support to Other	558,120	541,180																	
ASC	58306	LDS Short Breaks Service	467,670	481,320																	

	ASC	59213	Adult Respite in the Community	32,330	29,940
	CSC	70407	Short Breaks for Disabled Children	68,430	68,430
	CSC	70410	Castlegate	634,450	720,260
				1,814,850	1,898,140
<p>To note - Approx £530k of the ASC expenditure is funded through the Better Care Fund.</p> <p>The Accelerating Reform Fund grant, received from the Department of Health and Social Care, is being used to set up the online self-assessment service for carers. A breakdown of the grant funding is also attached in Appendix B. Although there is a risk that the self-assessment service might increase the cost for carers there are potential benefits of having this. The carers self-assessment service will ensure that requests for carers' assessments are completed in a timely manner which is a requirement of the Care Act 2014. By completing carers' assessments on time can also result in preventing, reducing and delaying the development of longer-term care and support needs for the cared for person and the carer.</p>					
Human Resource:	Officer time will be required to take forward implementation.				
Legal:	<p>The Local Authority's duties to carers are set out in the Care Act 2014. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To provide and maintain an information and advice service about what can be done to help them (and those they care for), prevent, reduce, or delay the development of longer-term needs for care and support and help them look after their own wellbeing. b) A statutory entitlement for an assessment and support. c) Arranging an independent advocate for any carer who would find it difficult to participate in their assessment and support planning when there is no one else to help. <p>The adoption of the strategy will support compliance with those Care Act duties.</p> <p>It is important to note that the Care Quality Commission will expect that we have a dedicated carers' strategy which will support the delivery of the local authority's duties towards carers.</p>				
Risk Management:	N/A				

Property:	N/A			
Policy:	N/A			
	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			The strategy should deliver improved support to unpaid carers including those with protected characteristics, e.g. disabilities.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The Strategy should deliver improved support to unpaid Carers including those with protected characteristics, e.g. disabilities.
Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:	X			Social Care needs are closely related to Health needs; the strategy refers to continued joint working with our health partners
ICT Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The Carers Strategy supports the priorities outlined in the Council's Strategy.

Core Business:	X			The Carers Strategy supports the priorities outlined in the Council's Strategy.
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Consultation has taken place with key stakeholders and organisations during the development of the draft strategy. The partner organisations include representatives from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board 2. Unpaid representative (with lived experience) 3. Healthwatch West Berkshire 4. Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust 5. Carers Partnership for Reading and West Berkshire 6. The Advocacy People, Learning Disability Partnership Board 7. Crossroads Care for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire 8. Friends of Young Carers <p>Public Consultation took place from 7th October to 17th November 2024. All consultation activities are now completed.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 There are important benefits to be derived from the publication of a Carers Strategy for adults and children. It provides the following:

- Clarity on how the council will work together with partner organisations to identify and improve support for unpaid carers.
- Clarity on how the council and partner organisations will support unpaid carers to improve their physical, mental, emotional, and overall wellbeing.
- Clarity on the council's commitment to providing information and advice to unpaid carers when they need it and at the right time.
- Greater awareness about the role of unpaid carers and the valuable contribution they make and enabling them to access help and support.

4.2 A draft strategy has been developed and taken through the following steps:

- a) Draft Strategy considered at Corporate Board and Operations Board prior to public consultation.
- b) Public consultation, with a good level of responses from unpaid carers and providers. Those responses have now been incorporated into the latest draft. Please see Appendix D for survey responses.
- c) The Carers Strategy Sub-Group members met to go through the survey responses from the public consultation to ensure that feedback was captured appropriately.
- d) The sub-group made changes to the draft Carers strategy following the public consultation.

4.3 The Strategy is now ready for adoption, subject to relevant approvals.

5. Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The Carers Strategy 2019-2021 has now been reviewed using a co-production model.

Background

5.2 The Carers Strategy has been developed through:

- (a) Formation of a sub-group of the Carers Strategy Group which has reviewed the existing Carers Strategy and developed a new iteration.
- (b) Development of an Action Plan which will be monitored by the Carers Strategy Group in the quarterly meetings. The Carers Strategy Group reports to the Senior Management Teams in Adult Social Care and Children and Family Service. The Group also reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board and provides regular updates in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan.

Proposals

5.3 The statutory foundation of the carer's strategy underscores its significance, making its adoption essential for ensuring comprehensive support and recognition for carers. The proposal is that the Carers Strategy 2025-2028 is now published.

6 Other options considered

6.1 To not publish a Carers Strategy. This is not advised as it will undermine the support to this important group.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The publication of the Carers' Strategy is an important step in ensuring that carers are appropriately supported by the council and partner agencies.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Equity Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix B – Accelerating Reform Fund Grant from the Department of Health and Social Care
- 8.3 Appendix C -Carers Strategy 2025-2028 (Draft)
- 8.4 Appendix D- Survey Responses

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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Appendix A

West Berkshire Council Equity Impact Assessment

March 2025

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	People, Adult Social Care.
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	<p>The Carers Strategy 2025-28 (draft)</p> <p>Local Authority duties to carers are set out in the Care Act 2014. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To provide and maintain an information and advice service about what can be done to help them (and those they care for) preventing, reducing, or delaying the development of longer-term needs for care and support and helping them look after their own wellbeing. b) Statutory entitlement for an assessment and support. c) Arranging an independent advocate for any carer who would find it difficult to participate in their assessment and support planning when there is no one else to help. <p>The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to promote the individual wellbeing of adults with care and support needs and carers in their area. In line with this it is the expectation that the existing carers strategy is revised.</p>
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	The existing strategy has been reviewed and updated.
<p>Summary of assessment</p> <p>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).</p>	<p>The Carers Strategy will provide clarity on how the council intends to support unpaid carers, how it intends to work with partner agencies and staff.</p> <p>A strategy that is of benefit to unpaid carers providing them with opportunities for better outcomes. This will ensure carers feel more supported in their caring role, are able to improve their wellbeing and have a life outside of caring.</p> <p>The strategy does not create any bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individual or groups within the community.</p>

Completed By	Hannah Cole
Authorised By	Paul Coe
Date of Assessment	26 th March 2025

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>The existing strategy is out of date and needed to be reviewed. The Carers Strategy Group has worked with the following partner organisations to review the strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthwatch West Berkshire • Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust • Carers Partnership for Reading and West Berkshire • The Advocacy People, LD Partnership Board • Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Crossroads Care • Friends of Young Carers <p>A sub-group of the Carers Strategy Group was formed to work on reviewing the existing strategy. The unpaid carer representative is part of the sub-group.</p> <p>Unpaid carers and young carers make a vital contribution to their communities by supporting those with care and support needs. This includes caring for relatives and friends sometimes at the expense at their own health. Therefore, it is important that the council supports carers in their caring roles as they do not only bring significant benefits to their communities but reduce the financial impact to the council. There is clear evidence and value in maintaining them in their role.</p> <p>The proposed strategy has identified six key priority areas. The proposed strategy focuses on carers' wellbeing (emotional, physical and mental) so they can carry out their caring roles. Regular breaks for carers have been flagged as important to prevent carer burnout and the effect this will have on the cared for person (impact on the quality of care they provide). Another key area identified in the proposed strategy is encouraging carers to see that there is a life outside of caring and for young carers to achieve their full potential.</p>
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<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>Data information/research</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data has been used from the Caring for Others Survey. 2. Consultation on the Draft Carers Strategy took place for six weeks. A survey was carried out on the draft strategy to capture the views of unpaid carers in West Berkshire. Please see Appendix D for survey results/responses. 3. The Carers Strategy Sub-group met following the survey results to incorporate the views of unpaid carers in the draft strategy. 4. Care Act 2014 5. Children and Families Act 2014 4. The strategy has been co-produced with partner organisations for their views and feedback.
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that 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.</p>	<p>The strategy was out for public consultation for six weeks</p> <p>See survey results - Appendix D</p>

<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>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.</p>	
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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	<p>The draft Carers Strategy 2025-2028 Consultation Survey results, carer profile data highlighted that 29.31% of carers who participated in the survey were between the ages of 65 - 74 yrs making it the highest age group of carers.</p> <p>Therefore, the strategy will provide support to this group in various ways:</p>	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028

					general wellbeing and early signposting on financial issues, Providing support short and long-term respite to enable carers to attend health appointments , consideration of incorporating technology assisted care and offering carers assessments in a timely manner.		
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	Providing support for unpaid carers will have a positive impact on the people receiving care and support from a relative or friend resulting in improved wellbeing.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social	2025-2028

						Worker for Adults	
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	The revision or development of the Carers Strategy is to identify barriers and provide support for carers from diverse communities. The Delivery Plan or Action Plan will address the identified barriers. The Carers Strategy will support the right to early identification of carers and offered an assessment of their needs	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028

					under the Care Act 2014.		
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	<p>The draft Carers Strategy 2025-2028 Consultation Survey results highlighted 63.79% of carers who participated in the survey were females. This is a high proportion.</p> <p>This strategy will support this group of carers as some of them may have a double caring role.</p>	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social	2025-2028

						Worker for Adults	
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	The strategy will build on offering digital access to carers (on line support services). West Berkshire Directory has comprehensive information and advice for carers. The Carers Self-assessment service is in development. It is the intention that with the implementation of this service, carers assessments will be completed in a timely manner.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028

Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
Care experienced people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	People recognise the benefits of care provision.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2025-2028

9 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	March 2026
Person Responsible for Review	Hannah Cole
Authorised By	Paul Coe

Appendix B

Accelerating Reform Fund Grant from the Department of Health and Social Care

	March 2023 - 2024			Sept 2024 - 2025	
Place	RNF 23/24 funding	Consortium floor funding split as agreed by LAs	Total	RNF 24/25 funding	Total
Oxfordshire	£ 71,612	£ 75,000	£ 146,612	£ 218,707	£ 365,319
Buckinghamshire	£ 52,229	£ 75,000	£ 127,229	£ 159,511	£ 286,740
Reading	£ 17,798	£ 50,000	£ 67,798	£ 54,355	£ 122,152
West Berkshire	£ 15,653	£ 50,000	£ 65,653	£ 47,805	£ 113,458
Wokingham	£ 12,550	£ 50,000	£ 62,550	£ 38,327	£ 100,876
Total	£ 169,841	£ 300,000	£ 469,841	£ 518,704	£ 988,545

Appendix C

Carers Strategy 2025-2028 (Draft)

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West Berkshire Council's Carers Strategy

2025-2028(Draft)



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Foreword

By the Executive Members for Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

I am pleased to introduce the West Berkshire Council's Carers' Strategy that covers the period 2025 to 2028.

Unpaid carers provide extremely valued services to the people they care for and to the community. These services are often overlooked and undervalued. This strategy sets out the actions that West Berkshire Council and its partners are planning to do to support carers and young carers. This is to help them in their caring responsibilities and to help them develop their own lives.

The strategy has been developed in conjunction with carers and young carers to ensure that their views were taken into account.

The role of Young Carers is often unrecognised; it is exciting they are being seen and we have a strategy being put in place that includes them. This Strategy will assist in raising awareness and allowing them to take part in normal life, outside of caring duties.



Councillor Patrick Clark
Executive Member
for Adult Social Care and
Public Health
West Berkshire Council



Councillor Heather Codling
Executive Member for
Children's Services
West Berkshire Council

Summary

The Vision and Purpose of the strategy:

This strategy explains how adult social care and partner organisations will work together to support carers of all ages over the next 3 years. Carers make a valuable contribution to the lives of people with care needs. In West Berkshire we want carers to feel recognised, listened to and supported to enable them to carry out their caring roles should they wish to do so.

The Priorities of the strategy:

1. Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support.	2. Provide information and advice to carers and young carers.	3. Enable access to Peer Support Groups for carers and young carers.	4. Carers are supported to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.	5. Support carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.	6. Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential.
<p>Raise Awareness Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership will continue to organise campaign events. The campaigns are to raise awareness of caring and the role of unpaid carers. Various events are organized during the year: Young Carers Action Day (annual event in March), National Carers Week (annual event in June) and Carers Rights Day (annual event in November).</p> <p>Link up with Volunteer Centre, community centres, Newbury Library and Citizens Advice to make them aware of these events to promote among unpaid carers.</p> <p>Encourage carers who want to share their stories to do so. Stories can be recorded in audio, or video or translated into different languages.</p> <p>These stories will bring to light the significant contribution carers make and seeing them as experts and working in partnership with them.</p> <p>Identification of Carers Training package for both internal and external professionals and partners to enable them to recognise and identify unpaid carers and where to signpost them.</p> <p>Organise workshops to deliver the training. Provide information about how to access the training and course content. Identify and support carers from diverse communities, travellers, refugees, asylum seekers. Liaise with Berkshire Volunteer Centre, Citizens Advice, community centres to reach out to 'hidden' carers.</p>	<p>Promotion of the West Berkshire Directory to residents and professionals. There are plans to use the Accelerating Reform Funding grant to create a self-assessment service for unpaid carers by Summer 2025. Guidance will be provided to unpaid carers about completing the self-assessment service.</p> <p>To be able to access the carers self-assessment service carers must be digitally literate.</p> <p>Promote and provide information about the Young Carers Card and Young Carers Newsletter for Young Carers in West Berkshire. The Newsletter is published quarterly. Young carers cards will be co-produced with young carers, dependent on funding available.</p> <p>For Young carers social media, Facebook, Instagram pages are updated weekly.</p> <p>The Young Carers Newsletter is circulated widely (all schools in West Berkshire, Youth Centres and Library) so that young carers know where to get support and what the support entails. It is important for young carers to know the benefits of having the Young carers card.</p> <p>Partner organisations providing or publicising online resources, e.g. •Joy - Joy Social Prescribing Software (thejoyapp.com) •SHaRON. •E-Learning. •Libraries. •Explore the growing potential of social media via the use of Twitter/Facebook to increase connectivity and highlight available support. Carers have access to good quality information in the carer journey when they need it.</p> <p>Adequate information for carers will continue to be provided through the Carers Partnership contact, and through Crossroads Care Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.</p> <p>Work with communities to disseminate information about carers, offer advice and to ensure access from diverse communities. We are currently reviewing our translation and interpreting services.</p>	<p>Young Carers Service to continue providing support and advice to young carers.</p> <p>Opportunities for peer network and connections.</p> <p>Young carers are provided with the support they need to learn, develop and enjoy being a young person. Encouraging and promoting schools in West Berkshire to be active to take responsibility for young carers in their settings.</p> <p>Recruiting Young Carer champions within schools.</p> <p>Signposting Adult carers to Peer support groups.</p> <p>Adult Social Care and the Carers Partnership can signpost carers to appropriate charities, voluntary and private organisations.</p>	<p>Raising awareness of the health impacts of caring.</p> <p>The Carers Partnership, General Practitioner Surgeries, Adult Social Care will help reinforce the importance of carers mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.</p> <p>Carers will be followed up in writing after a carer's assessment with a clear outcome. The assessment should include consideration of the impact on the caring role on the carer's mental, physical emotional and overall wellbeing.</p> <p>Improve support options for carers so that they can have time for their own appointments to get their own health checks done. Providing a sitting service to allow them time to get these done (this is subject to an individual carer's assessment).</p> <p>Improve opportunities for young carers to access emotional health and wellbeing support to reinforce the importance of young carers mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.</p>	<p>Working with Commissioners in Adult Social Care to look at the current offer around respite provision and direct payments for carers to enable them to access flexible short breaks and respite.</p> <p>All school holiday activities for young carers.</p> <p>Honeyput Charity provides overnight respite breaks for young carers up to the age of 13 years.</p> <p>To safeguard against young carers providing inappropriate levels of care. Carers assessments to be offered. No Wrong Doors Procedures in place.</p> <p>Work with the Disabled Children's Team to look at the current offer around respite provision and direct payments for parent carers.</p> <p>An assessment is offered to the parents /families for a Parent carer needs assessment by the Children with Disabilities Team. This is dependent on whether the parent meets the eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Supporting access to replacement care when necessary.</p> <p>To inform Adult Social Care as early as possible when this is necessary.</p> <p>Identifying sustainable arrangements.</p>	<p>Social Care professionals to recognise carers' right to life outside caring.</p> <p>Recognise transition points – becoming a carer, stopping a caring role, moving from being a young carer to an adult carer.</p> <p>Training opportunities through West Berkshire Consortium for Young carers who are 16+.</p> <p>Encourage young carers to fully access their education and support them to remove barriers to learning.</p> <p>Work with young carers to co-produce a young carers identity card which will encourage them to seek support in school and other activities.</p>

1. Introduction

West Berkshire Council Carers Strategy 2025-2028 explains how the council, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board and partner organisations plan to work together to identify, improve support and enable unpaid carers who live in West Berkshire or are providing care to someone who lives in West Berkshire to balance their caring responsibilities with a life outside of caring.

2. Purpose

This strategy covers unpaid carers of all ages including children, young people and adults living in the West Berkshire Council area. Carers and young carers make a vital contribution to their community by supporting those with care and support needs. The caring role is unique but carers can be grouped into different categories to ensure we provide the right help and support to match their needs. Some examples include young carers (aged under 18 years), carers aged 18-25 years, working carers, parent carers (providing care to a child with additional needs under the age of 18 years), and carers providing support to someone aged 18 or over, unidentified and unknown carers.

Kinship care is when a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or close family friend, usually because their parents are not able to care for them. Grandparents are the most common kinship carers, but older siblings, aunts, uncles, and people who know the child well can also take on the role. Championing kinship care: national kinship care strategy.

According to NHS England ([NHS - Who is considered a Carer](#)) A carer has been defined as “anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot

cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid”. It is important to bear in mind that care can be provided in different settings for example in supported living accommodation, nursing and residential care homes and this care can be practical or emotional. This strategy acknowledges that although this group of carers do not provide daily direct care and support to their relative or friend, they do provide care in various other ways which contributes to the overall wellbeing of the cared for person.

Throughout this strategy the term ‘carers’ covers all carers including Young carers.

The council wants all carers to have the support that they need and when they need it most (in a timely manner) without unnecessary delays. This involves providing the right information available to them at the right time and in a format that is appropriate and accessible to them.

We recognise caring for someone can be a tough job so we want to make sure carers have timely support to ensure they can continue in their caring role and have a life outside of caring.

3. National and Local Policies

This strategy is based on the following legislation and relevant National Policies and guidance that support carers:

- [- Care Act 2014](#)
- [- Children Act 1989](#)
- [- Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [- Carers action plan 2018 to 2020](#)
- [- National Health Service Act 2006](#)
- [- NHS England » Commitment to carers](#)
- [- Carers UK - State of caring 2022](#)
- [- Carers UK - State of caring 2023](#)
- [-Carers Leave Act 2023](#)

Local Strategies, Policies and Guidance include:

- West Berkshire Council - Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030
- Council Strategy 2023-2027
- Public Health for Berkshire - Berkshire West 0-19s Health Needs Assessment 2020
- West Berkshire Council - Adult Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2022 (currently being revised)
- No Wrong Doors
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework (Dec 2023)

Other Relevant documents that the West Berkshire Carers Strategy is linked to are:

- Berkshire Policies & Procedures for Safeguarding Adults
- West Berkshire Council Equality Policy (Jan 2018)
- West Berkshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029



4. Approach

This overarching strategy identifies a set of key priorities and will be supported by a **Carers Strategy Action Plan** which will be owned, monitored and reviewed (quarterly) by the Carers Strategy Group. The Group is made up of:

- Principal Social Worker for Adults – Chair of the group meetings.
- Advocates from the Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Carers Partnership, Reading and West Berkshire
- Carers Lead at Berkshire Healthcare (NHS)
- Outreach Team, The Watermill Theatre
- Unpaid carer with lived experience
- Public Health Team, WBC
- Representative from NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West (BOB ICB)
- Information Coordinator Adult Social Care (WBC)
- Early Help & Prevention Lead for the Children Contact Advice & Assessment Service
- Health Watch, West Berkshire

The strategy has been developed based on feedback from carers and in partnership with organisations listed below.

5. Partner Organisations

- Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board
- Unpaid carer representative
- Healthwatch West Berkshire
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Carers Partnership for Reading and West Berkshire
- The Advocacy People, LD Partnership Board
- Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Crossroads Care
- Friends of Young Carers

As of 1st November 2022 West Berkshire Council entered a partnership with Reading Borough Council and formed the Carers Partnership for Reading and West Berkshire. The partnership members are made up of four charities; Age UK Berkshire, Age UK Reading, CommuniCare and Reading Mencap.



The Carers Partnership

- Provide support for carers in their caring role.
- Get support to help you in your caring role.
- Find local services and sources of help.
- Look after your health and wellbeing.
- Connect with other carers.
- Understand your rights.
- Carers Assessments for Reading based carers.

How to contact the Carers Partnership:

CommuniCare provides information, advice and support to carers in need in Reading and West Berkshire.

CommuniCare, 233 Kings Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 4LS
Telephone: 0118 926 3941
Email: [Email address for CommuniCare](#)
Website: [Website address for CommuniCare](#)

Age UK Berkshire provides support for the carers of older people age 50 plus in West Berkshire.

Age UK Berkshire, Unit 119 Broad Street Mall, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 7QE
Telephone: 0118 959 4242
Email: [Email address for Age UK Berkshire](#)
Website: [Website address for Age UK Berkshire](#)

Reading Mencap offers support for carers of children and adults with a learning disability and/or autism.

Reading Mencap, 21 Alexandra Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5PE
Telephone: 0118 966 2518
Email: [Email address for Reading Mencap](#)
Website: [Website address for Reading Mencap](#)

Age UK Reading offers support to carers of older people over the age of 50 in Reading.

Age UK Reading, Walford Hill, Carey Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 7JS
Telephone: 0118 950 2480
Email: [Email address for Age UK Reading](#)
Website: [Website address for Age UK Reading](#)

6. Our Vision

We want West Berkshire to be a community where:

- Carers of all ages are identified, recognized and valued.
- Carers have access to relevant information and can access the support they need (either practical or emotional) to meet their ongoing needs.
- We want to ensure that intervention and support make a positive difference in our unpaid carers' lives
- Carers can achieve the desired outcomes that matter to them.

7. Equality and Diversity

Carers come from diverse backgrounds: race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, disability (mental or physical). The West Berkshire Equality Policy aims to promote fairness and demonstrate equality of opportunity in the provision of services to all its residents. The needs of carers from these groups may be different. Our Carers Strategy Plan will seek to ensure that carers from diverse backgrounds receive access to relevant information to address any barriers that may have been identified. It will seek to ensure there is fair access to services for carers of all ages irrespective of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The Council values the work that carers do and wants to make sure they have the support they need for themselves and in their caring role. This includes providing information about promoting their general health and wellbeing, employment, activities outside of their caring role, training opportunities, having regular breaks and keeping in contact with friends and other family members (networks).

8. Overview of the 6 Priorities

In order to achieve our vision, we have identified the following 6 key priority areas:

- 1. Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support.**
- 2. Provide information and advice to carers and young carers.**
- 3. Enable access to Peer Support Groups for carers and young carers.**
- 4. Carers are supported to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.**
- 5. Support carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.**
- 6. Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential.**

“For West Berkshire to be a community where carers of all ages are identified, recognised and valued.”

Overview of West Berkshire Council Carers Strategy 2025-2028



Priorities identified by carers

Carer Key Priorities

Access to Respite care –unsure how to access this support

Emotional and mental health support

Efficient communication from Local authority and other agencies

Impact of caring and quality of life

Information and Advice – not knowing what is available for carers

Help with practical tasks at home (household tasks)

9. Priority 1

Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support.

Why is it important?

Until a carer or young carer has been identified, they cannot access support either emotionally, physically or financially. Most people do not see themselves as a carer.

As stated in the State of Caring 2022 report '71% of carers stated that seeing themselves primarily as a family member or friend was a barrier to identifying themselves as a carer. Half of all carers (51%) took over a year to recognise their caring role, with over a third (36%) taking over three years to recognise themselves as a carer'.

These carers are therefore missing out on help and support that could help them in their caring role and access to information such as carers' groups and benefits advice. They could also be missing out on legal rights, practical help, or rights in the workplace or Technology Enabled Care. Early identification is a key barrier in getting the required support as a carer at the right time. Therefore one of the key actions this strategy will do is to raise the profile of residents in West Berkshire who are involved in a caring role to recognise themselves as a carer at the onset of their caring role. Understanding their rights is crucial which in turn helps them to access support as a carer.

To achieve this we will need support from our health partners, schools and colleges, voluntary sector services, community groups and private organisations.

What is the picture in West Berkshire?

According to the 2021 Census data for Unpaid carers in England and Wales published by the Office for National Statistics on the 19th January 2023 indicates an under reporting of carer status. The explanation given for this is linked to the question asked in the 2021 census which differed to the question and wording in the 2011 census. In the 2021 census 4.4% of West Berkshire residents (aged five years and over)

reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week. This figure decreased from 7.2% in 2011. These are age-standardised proportions. Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census and 2021 Census.

The overview of support to carers registered with Adult Social Care in West Berkshire is 1273 for 2022/23. This has been noted as a 6% decrease in volume reported in 2021/22 (ASC Statutory Returns 2022/23).



Priority 1

Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support. How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Raise Awareness</p> <p>Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership will continue to organise campaign events. The campaigns are to raise awareness of caring and the role of unpaid carers. Various events are organized during the year: National Carers Week (annual event in June) and Carers Rights Day (annual event in November).</p> <p>Link up with Volunteer Centre, community centres, Newbury Library and Citizens Advice to make them aware of these events to promote among unpaid carers.</p>	<p>Monitor the number of carers who attend these events regularly or on a one-off basis.</p>	<p>2025-2028</p>	<p>Increase in number of carers who attend these events and check whether new carers were identified.</p> <p>According to the latest Office for National Statistics survey results which were published in January 2023 Unpaid care, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) the number of households in West Berkshire increased in 2021 to 66,700. 92.2% of people aged 5 years and over provide no unpaid care in West Berkshire.</p>
	<p>Encourage carers who want to share their stories to do so. Stories can be recorded in audio, or video or translated into different languages.</p> <p>These stories will bring to light the significant contribution carers make and seeing them as experts and working in partnership with them.</p>	<p>Stories can be shared at carer events (with the consent of the carer).</p>	<p>2025-2028</p>	<p>More people will be able to identify themselves as carers.</p>

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Identification of carers</p> <p>Training package for both internal and external professionals and partners to enable them to recognise and identify unpaid carers and where to signpost them.</p> <p>Organise workshops to deliver the training.</p> <p>Provide information about how to access the training and course content.</p>	<p>Evaluation Forms from staff who attend the training to see whether their knowledge and understanding of carers has increased and how to support carers and where to signpost them.</p>	<p>2025-2028</p>	<p>An increase in the number of people attending the training workshops. This will also increase the number of carers being identified.</p>
	<p>Identify and support carers from diverse communities, travellers, refugees, asylum seekers. Liaise with Berkshire Volunteer Centre, Citizens Advice, Community Centre to reach out to 'hidden' carers.</p>	<p>To use the Office of National Statistics data to inform us about minority communities and languages represented in West Berkshire.</p>	<p>2025-2028</p>	<p>A fair representation of carers from all backgrounds across West Berkshire.</p>

10. Priority 2

To provide information and advice to carers and young carers.

This will ensure that carers can make informed decisions and access support in an appropriate way.

Why is it important?

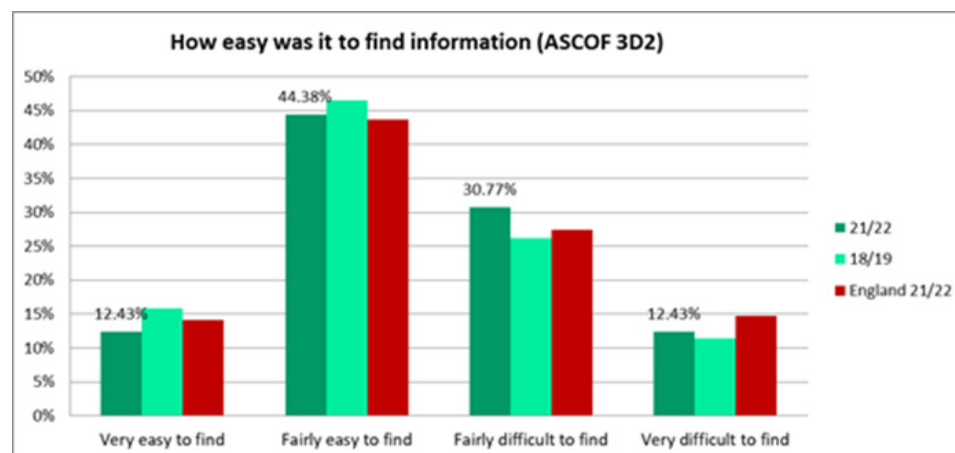
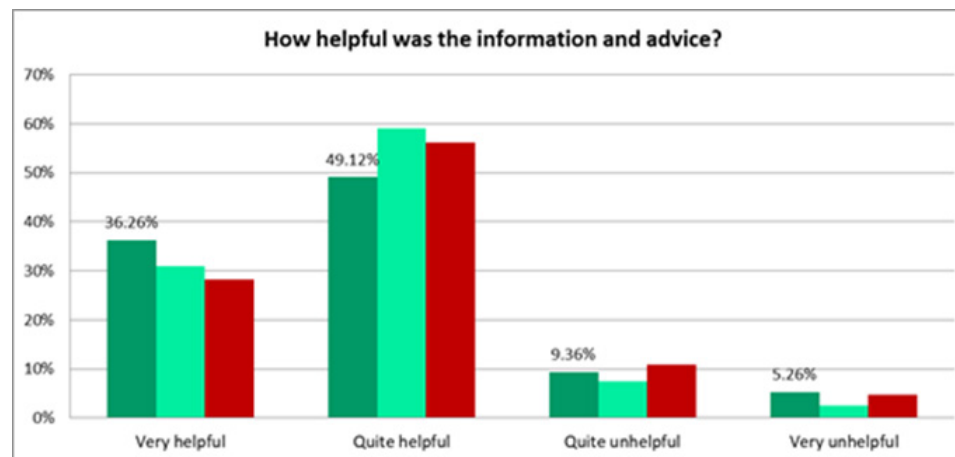
To provide personalised support to carers and make sure that the right information provided is accurate and easily accessible and in a variety of formats to enable carers and young carers to make informed decisions.

Formats to include large prints, PDF formats and translated into various languages on request. Providing information to ensure we are responsive, proactive and offer holistic support in a timely manner.

Care Act Statutory Guidance states clearly the Council's duty to provide information and advice to all service users which carers should also have access to.

According to the West Berkshire Adult Social Care Caring for Others Survey 2021/22 conducted by Adult Social Care West Berkshire with regards to information and advice quality, 85.4% of carers found information and advice received 'very' or 'quite' helpful compared with (ASCOF 3D2) where 56.8% of carers found it 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to find. The Survey Summary report noted a drop in performance compared to 2018/19.

Adult Social Care Caring for Others survey 2021/22



We also looked at the findings from the Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021/22 in relation to what carers said about information and advice they received. The percentage of carers that used information and advice to help them as a carer dropped from 51.4 % (150,220) in 2018/19 to 49.9% (160,760) in 2021/22. 47.4% (294,750) of carers in 2021/22 did not use information and advice.

Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England - NHS Digital

Information and Advice is key to ensuring people recognise themselves as carers so that they can be able to access ongoing support. Carers and young carers should have access to various types of support online. Online support is highly valued by some carers although it is acknowledged not all carers have easy access to online facilities. The internet provides an alternative way for carers to access information and advice but also peer support whenever it is needed. This can be particularly important for carers who find themselves restricted to the home because of their caring role. Young carers in particular can find support provided online to be useful.

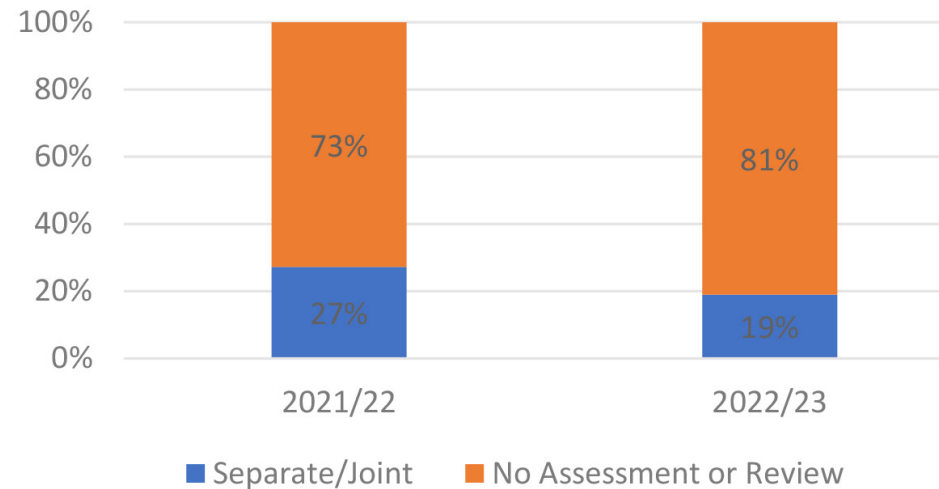
What is the picture in West Berkshire for Carer’s assessments?

A carer’s assessment is ‘a chance to let your local council or trust know how your caring responsibilities affect you physically and emotionally. They will use the assessment to find out what support you need, whether you’re willing or able to carry on caring, what you want to achieve in your daily life and whether you qualify for help. If you are a young carer and looking after someone on a regular basis, there is support and help available to help you cope. If you’re helping to look after someone – for example, you’re cleaning regularly, helping them move around indoors or outdoors, or supporting them with their personal needs – you have certain legal rights to help you get some extra support (introduced in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Families Act 2014)’.

Carers UK; Having a carer’s assessment.

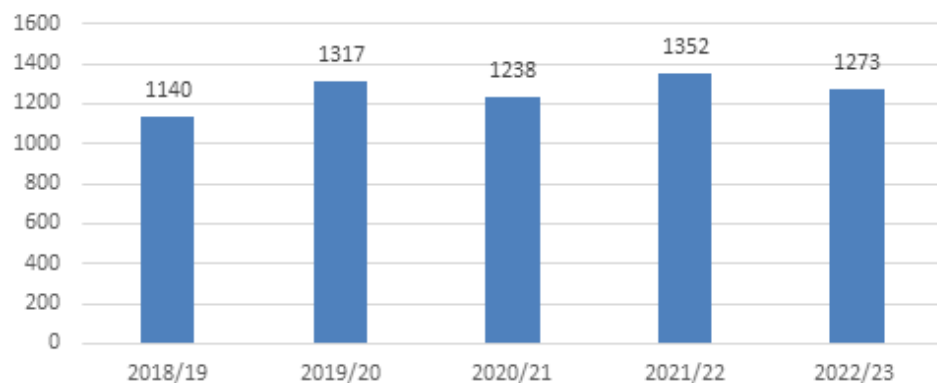
The graph below shows the percentage of Carers Assessment or Reviews completed by ASC from 2021 to 2022/23.

Carers Assessed or Reviewed during the Year



Carers assessed/reviewed has decreased (241 compared to 368 last year).Proportion of carers assessed has decreased to 19% compared to 27% last year’ (SALT ASC Statutory Reporting 2022/23).

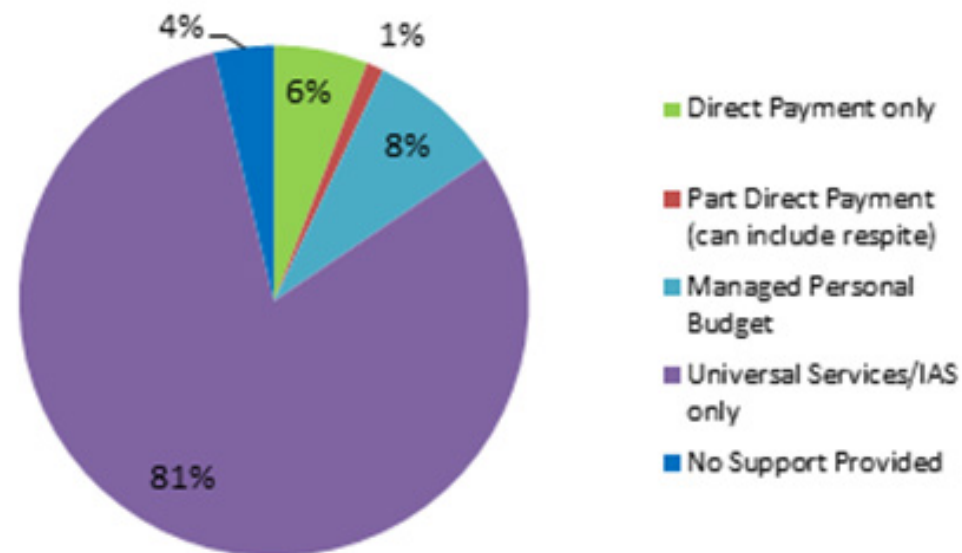
Distinct Carers supported in the year



LTS003: Carers Supported in the Year

- 1273 carers reported, a 6% decrease.
- 81% received Information/Advice/Signposting. The majority of carers are identified as part of the 'cared for' assessment.
- Carers independently assessed/reviewed has decreased (241 compared to 368 last year), more are jointly assessed as part of cared-for assessment.

2022/23 Carers support provided in Adult Social Care West Berkshire



Datasource: LTS003 Carers statutory reports

Young Carers Assessments completed by Children's Services

Young Carers Storyboard 1

What were the concerns?

Referral received from school highlighting family struggling with the challenging behaviours of older brother H due to dual diagnosis. Parents felt they were at crisis point and some physical altercations between father and H. S17 assessment led to FF support with referral to Young carers for F.

Where we were and what was likely outcome?

It was noted that F was a clear source of support for H when he was highly dysregulated and was at times the only one who could calm him down. Parents were struggling with him physically and was witness to them attempting to manage him physically and F some risk of physical harm. Without intervention both H and F were at risk of further emotional and physical harm.

What difference have we made?

F is due to attend weekly groups and be offered holiday activities which will give her some respite from her role in supporting her brother at home as well as allow her to connect with other young carers her own age. She can also attend the Theatre group described as "A weekly drama group for young people who have complications in their life to take time out, connect and play. If you would like some time each week to clear your head, use your imagination, and explore your world, interval could be for you. Each session will be playful, creative, and different, using all the fun of drama with none of the pressure."

What have we done differently with Early Response Hub within CAAS Front Door?

FF referred F for a Young carers assessment to consider her active role in supporting her brother. It was clear that F does not get to attend any activities outside of school due to the support she offers her brother and how busy her parents are managing his needs. F meets the criteria of being a Young carer and was offered the weekly youth club and holiday activities. She was also referred to The Water Mills theatre interval weekly group.

What were the concerns?

Some family history and a current referral from the LA's ASD specialist who noted the impact of siblings additional needs on J.

Where we were and what was the likely outcome?

The family present as protective and acting appropriately to manage the needs of all children in the home however, J may have struggled with expressing emotions or feeling rather burdened by his caring role without support.

How will this be achieved?

There is a responsibility on each partner organisation making sure that their information and advice to carers is:

- Clear
- Relevant and appropriate
- Proportionate

Cover areas relevant to carers e.g. carers' Rights, welfare benefits, available services and assessment process.

What difference have we made?

The family have access to community services and support including young carers through the service. This has allowed them to ensure J has a break and enjoy activities they could not otherwise access.

What have we done differently with Early Response Hub within CAAS Front Door?

Young carers assessment noted that J met criteria for services. Whilst he does not attend a weekly youth club he does enjoy holiday activities including a recent sailing trip and any further water based activities will ensure he is prioritised.

Priority 2

To provide information and advice to carers and young carers.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	Promotion of the West Berkshire Directory to residents and professionals. There are plans to use the Accelerating Reform Funding grant to create a self-assessment service for unpaid carers by Summer 2025. Guidance will be provided to unpaid Carers about completing the self-assessment service.	Through Carers accessing West Berkshire Directory. A marketing campaign commenced following the upgrade. The campaign will focus on residents(including carers), partners and professionals. Face to face focus support can be given to groups how to find information.	2025-2028	Carers can use the directory more easily to find the information they need at the right time.
	To be able to access the carers self-assessment service carers must be digitally literate.	Record of how many carers complete the online assessment and how many are unable to do so. Alternative options to be provided to carers who are not able to complete the online self - assessments.	2025-2028	Carers will be more digitally literate and be able to access online services and support much quicker.

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Promote and provide information about the Young Carers Card and Young Carers Newsletter for Young carers in West Berkshire. The Newsletter is published quarterly. Young carers cards will be co-produced with young carers, dependent on funding available.</p> <p>For young carers social media, Facebook, Instagram pages are updated weekly.</p> <p>The Young Carers Newsletter is circulated widely (all schools in West Berkshire, Youth Centres and Library) so that young carers know where to get support and what the support entails. It is important for young carers to know the benefits of having the Young Carers card.</p>	<p>The Young Carers card is important as it enables access to social activities where the young carer is in a supporting role and may need to identify themselves as a carer. Other instances it may be beneficial to have the card is when a Young carer may be collecting medication for the cared for person and identification as a carer is required.</p> <p>While the young carers card is in development, schools will be invited to trial the opportunity with identified young carers in their setting. Priority will be given to secondary schools where statistically young carers are more likely to be identified. A young carer must have had an assessment prior to being issued a young carers card.</p>	2025-2028	<p>Increase in requests for Young Carers Card.</p> <p>Increase in number of young carers who participate in the activities. Good uptake to the activities organised for young carers.</p> <p>Increase number of followers on social media and interaction from young carers and families.</p>
	<p>Partner organisations providing or publicising online resources, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joy - Joy Social Prescribing Software (thejoyapp.com) • SHaRON. • E-Learning. • Libraries. • Explore the growing potential of social media via the use of Twitter/ Facebook to increase connectivity and highlight available support. 	<p>Increase in online resources for Carers information so it is easy for Carers when they are looking for any information.</p>	2025-2028	<p>Carers have a wider choice of online services and information they can access.</p>

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Carers have access to good quality information in the carer journey when they need it.</p> <p>Adequate information for carers will continue to be provided through the Carers Partnership contract, and through Crossroads Care Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.</p> <p>Work with Communities to disseminate information about carers, offer advice and to ensure access from diverse communities.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing our translation and interpreting services.</p>	<p>Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership submit a quarterly Contract Monitoring Report which outlines the number of carers that have been provided with information and advice.</p> <p>The NHS England-Personal Social Services Adult Social Care Survey (ASCS) takes place every two years. The survey has questions related to carers being provided with information and advice.</p> <p>Our website, including our Support for carers information Support for Carers - West Berkshire Council can be translated into other languages using Google Translate. Use the 'Websites' tab in Google Translate and paste the url, then choose the language.</p> <p>The Carers Information Booklet can be translated into different languages or formats such as large print on request and can be supplied Digital form or hard copy and posted out. Contact details for requests for different formats are on the back page of the booklet.</p>	2025-2028	Carers can access the information and support that enables them to continue in their caring role.

11. Priority 3

Enable Access to Peer Support Groups for Carers and Young Carers.

Why is it important?

Peer support groups for carers and young carers provide valuable emotional support. They provide an opportunity for carers and young carers to have a break from caring and can show them they are not alone in their caring role. In addition, carers and young carers can provide each other practical advice having been in the same situation and through attending a group, it can help a carer to escape social isolation. Groups can also support people to develop wider social relationships.

What is the picture in West Berkshire?

A large number of peer support groups currently exist for carers and young carers in West Berkshire. These have been identified as being valuable to the carers and young carers they support.



Priority 3

Enable Access to Peer Support Groups for Carers and Young Carers.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Young carers service to continue to carry out assessment of identified young carers and connect them to activities in their community.</p> <p>Opportunities for peer network and connections.</p> <p>Young carers are provided with the support they need to learn, develop and enjoy being a young person.</p>	Attendance at activities and groups.	2025-2028	Carers and young carers can build peer network and connections.
	<p>Encouraging and promoting schools in West Berkshire to be active to take responsibility for Young carers in their settings.</p> <p>Recruiting Young Carer champions within schools.</p>	Monitor to get regular updates among schools that are committed to recognising and supporting young carers.	2025-2028	<p>Increase in numbers of schools that have taken up this role.</p> <p>Currently two schools are actively running weekly groups and there is a key contact person within the school.</p>
	<p>Signposting Adult carers to Peer support groups.</p> <p>Adult Social Care and the Carers Partnership can signpost carers to appropriate charities, voluntary and private organisations.</p>	We will set a baseline for number of carers attending group sessions.	2025-2028	Benefit from services in the community and expand networks

12. Priority 4

Ensure Carers are supported to improve their Physical, Mental, Emotional and Overall Wellbeing.

Why is it important?

Caring can have a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of the person providing unpaid care. It is important that a carer and young carer are able to stay healthy, both for themselves but also to enable them to continue to provide their caring role. It is known that carers often neglect their own health, missing routine health checks and immunisations. In addition, carers often report feeling stressed, anxious and suffering from depression.

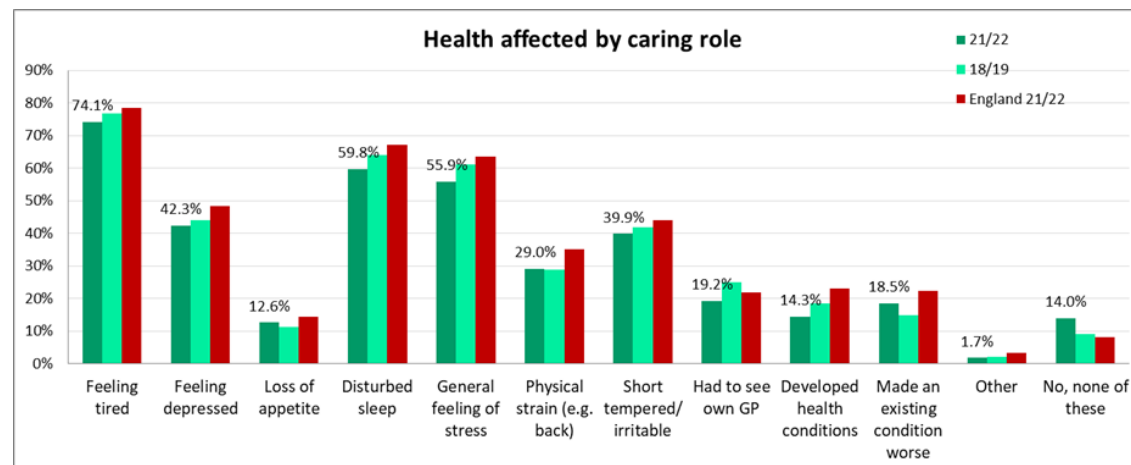
Carers and young carers play a vital role in our society. The Care Act 2014 has strengthened the rights and recognition of carers, giving them the equivalence in law to the people they care for. Carers are entitled to a thorough assessment of their needs with a duty placed on West Berkshire Council to provide help and support to promote the wellbeing of carers and young carers.

The Children and Families Act (2014) provides young carers with a similar right to assessment. It is important to acknowledge that although caring can be rewarding and fulfilling it can also have a negative impact on the carer on their physical health, emotional and mental wellbeing. It can lead to carer burn out and the caring role will be put at risk.

What is the picture in West Berkshire?

The Caring for Others Survey carried out by Adult Social Care West Berkshire Council 2021/22 findings in relation to what carers said about caring affecting their health.

‘Many carers report that their caring role is impacting on their health, with feeling tired and disturbed sleep the most common impacts (see graph below)’.



Similarly the survey of Adult carers in England 2021/22 findings showed that the caring role had impacted on carers' general health, with an increase in proportion of carers reporting general feelings of stress and feeling depressed. However the survey summary stated that 'the proportion of carers that had to see their own GP had decreased from 29.0 per cent (84,900) in 2018-19 to 21.8 per cent (70,190) in 2021-22. The summary report also stated that the impact of COVID-19 should be considered.

The State of Caring 2022 Survey Report mentions that 'there is increasing evidence that caring should be considered a social determinant of health'. One of the key findings from this survey was that 'over a fifth of carers (21%) said their physical health was 'bad' or 'very bad'. Carers rated their mental health as worse than their physical health, with 30% saying their mental health was 'bad' or very bad' (no change from 2021)'.

'there is increasing evidence that caring should be considered a social determinant of health'.



Priority 4

Carers are supported to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Raising awareness of the health impacts of caring.</p> <p>The Carers Partnership, General Practitioner Surgeries, Adult Social Care will help reinforce the importance of carers mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.</p>	<p>We will use census data from the National Carers Survey and Adult Social Care Survey to inform us.</p>	2025-2028	Improvement in carers mental and physical health and overall, wellbeing.
	<p>Carers will be followed up in writing after a carers assessment with a clear outcome. The assessment should include consideration of the impact on the caring role on the carer's mental, physical emotional and overall wellbeing.</p>	<p>Carers assessments to focus on the outcomes for the carers in relation to their health and overall wellbeing.</p>	2025-2028	Carers will be better equipped to continue their caring role should they wish to do so.
	<p>Improve support options for carers so that they can have time for their own appointments to get their own health checks done. Providing a sitting service to allow them time to get these done (this is subject to an individual carers assessment).</p>	<p>Carers to be provided with information so they can decide as early as possible and be referred to Crossroads care in advance of the appointments. They will need to be assessed by Crossroads Care who complete Risk assessments and draw up Care plans.</p> <p>Feedback from Crossroads Care for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.</p>	2025-2028	Improvement in carers health and wellbeing (physical and mental health).

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	Ensuring that carers have easier access to local services that can support and contribute to their overall wellbeing. For example, Eight Bells for Mental Health, Emotional Health Academy and Time to Talk. West Berkshire directory for more details on support services for carers.	To work closely with primary health care, GP practices and Social Prescribers service to support them to recognise the wider needs of carers which can affect their physical and mental health so that they are referred and signposted to appropriate services for support. For example, Talking Therapies through the health service.	2025-2028	Improvement in carers' mental health.
	To explore how carers can be provided with affordable and flexible opportunities which will enable them to participate in activities which promote and contribute to their health and wellbeing. Working closely with partners such as local leisure centres, community groups (West Berkshire Directory).	West Berkshire directory for more details on support services for carers.	2025-2028	Improvement in carers' overall wellbeing Results from the Surveys (National and the Caring for others Survey) will inform us.
	Employers to consider and include support for carers who are in employment as part of their wellbeing strategy. Carers Leave Act 2023 came into force on the 6th April 2024. Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 came into force in April 2024.	Dementia Friendly West Berkshire focus on raising awareness and understanding about dementia with employers and encourage local businesses and employers to consider support for carers.	2025-2028	Prevent carers from giving up work and support them to continue in employment.
	The effect of the cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on carers particularly those who care for those with a disability. Carers should therefore be supported to access grant funding and capital funding to help them improve their finances.	Additional information is available from West Berkshire Council Cost of Living : Health and Wellbeing West Berkshire Council; Cost of Living: Health and wellbeing	2025-2028	Getting the right information is crucial for carers with regards to their financial circumstances as this can help if they are finding things difficult financially.

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	Ensure Carers are included as a priority within Council continuity or emergency planning in response to national pandemic or similar.	Regular reporting and engagement with Public Health teams and the Health & Wellbeing Board to identify carer needs. For example, Covid 19 - priority appointments and vaccinations for carers.	2025-2028	Getting the right information to carers during a crisis will help their health and wellbeing enable them to continue in their caring role.

13. Priority 5

Support carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.

Why is it important?

Being a carer or young carer can be challenging, both physically and emotionally. Taking a break from this role is important to allow carers and young carers to focus on their own health and wellbeing. A break from caring can take a number of different forms, it may be an hour each week, a day here or there or a longer holiday away.

What is the picture in West Berkshire?

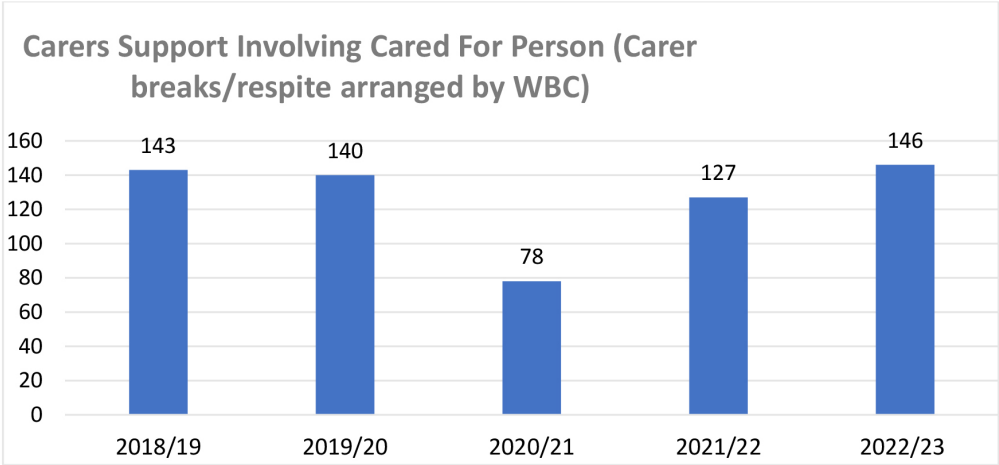
‘Carer Respite/Replacement care:

Respite arranged by LA has increased by 15%’ (SALT ASC statutory Reporting 2022/23). ‘Carers are given the opportunity to discuss with practitioners and support staff the value of having a break from caring and

the options available’. This cannot always be planned. Getting the support early without having to reach a crisis point is paramount.

Access to respite services for carers in West Berkshire is provided by Crossroads Care, covering Oxfordshire and West Berkshire areas. Crossroads Care provides emergency services for carers. Referrals can only be made within office hours to help with carers hospital appointments, carers breakdowns or emergency situation where a carer end up in hospital.

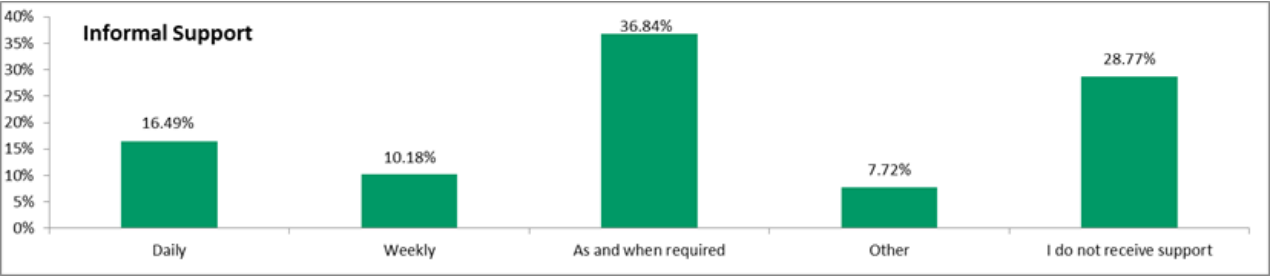
Findings from the Caring for others survey 2021/22 indicated respite care still remains an issue. ‘Respite- many indicated that they could use more respite in order to take long or short breaks from their caring role. Some indicated that they have requested this respite but unable to have it due to availability of carers’.



Informal Support

27% of respondents indicated that they have daily or weekly informal support to their caring role’.

Comparing this to the wider picture in the State of Caring 2022 report ‘41% of carers haven’t taken a break in the last year. A quarter of carers (26%) haven’t tried to take a break because they felt it was too difficult’.



Priority 5

Support carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	Working with Commissioners in Adult Social Care to look at the current offer around respite provision and direct payments for carers to enable them to access flexible short breaks and respite.	Carers Strategy Group quarterly meetings to get data from ASC on respite provision and direct payments being offered to carers.	2025-2028	Easier access to breaks will affect the quality of care, prevent carer burn out and carer breakdown.
	All school holiday activities for young carers. Honeypot Charity provides overnight respite breaks for young carers up to the age of 13 years.	Attendance at activities.	2025-2028	Be able to continue in their caring role, this will help to improve their health and wellbeing, having time away from their caring role. Increase in number of young carers attending allowing them respite from their caring role. Peer support from other young carers who are in similar situations. Positive impact on their mental and emotional health.
	To safeguard against young carers providing inappropriate levels of care. Carers Assessments to be offered. No Wrong Doors Procedures in place.	Families identified with children and young people in a caring role will be offered a young carers assessment.	2025-2028	Reduce levels of inappropriate care or emotional and physical impact of caring.

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Work with the Disabled Children's Team to look at the current offer around respite provision and direct payments for parent carers.</p> <p>An assessment is offered to the parents and families for a Parent carer needs assessment by the Children with Disabilities Team. This is dependent on whether the parent meets the eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>Request data from Disabled Childrens Team on respite provision and identify barriers in the process.</p>	<p>2025-2028</p>	<p>Prevent Parent carer stress and breakdown.</p>
	<p>Supporting access to replacement care when necessary.</p> <p>To inform Adult Social Care as early as possible when this is necessary.</p> <p>Identifying sustainable arrangements.</p>	<p>Encourage carers to be involved in the procurement process when arrangements are being made for respite breaks.</p>	<p>2025-2028</p>	<p>Reduce crisis and emergency situations but rather plan in advance where this is possible.</p>

14. Priority 6

Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential.

Why is it important?

It is essential for both carers and young carers to be supported to develop a life outside of caring. This may take the form of employment, volunteering, education or training, or in creating opportunities for socialising and leisure opportunities. This will help carers establish a life for themselves when they are no longer providing a caring role. Young carers in particular are known to have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level than their peers and therefore need support to bridge this gap and ensure that they fulfil their potential for achievement.

What is the picture in West Berkshire?

Increased access to adult education was highlighted as a recommendation within the West Berkshire Health Needs Assessment in previous years. In addition, the young carers Health Needs Assessment identified that many schools in West Berkshire do not have specific policies or procedures in place to support young carers with only limited provision of training for teachers.



Priority 6

Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities	What will we do	How we will measure or monitor progress	When we will do it	The impact we are expecting
	Social Care professionals to recognise carers' right to life outside caring.	Encourage applications for carers and young carers support linked to engaging in activities outside of the caring role. For example, gym membership or youth clubs.	2025-2028	Improvement in carer overall wellbeing and can continue in their caring role.
	Recognise transition points – becoming a carer, stopping a caring role, moving from being a young carer to an adult carer.	Adult Social Care to encourage a smooth transition within the organisation. No Wrong Doors Procedures in place. An agenda item to be on the Carers Strategy Group quarterly meetings on transitional arrangements.	2025-2028	Smooth transition from children's services to adult services.
	Encourage young carers to fully access their education and support them to remove barriers to learning.	Work directly with schools to increase their awareness of young carers and develop their understanding of how to support this group. Encourage primary schools to identify young carers when they are transitioning to secondary school and ensure additional help is provided at this stage.	2025-2028	Young carers will achieve better outcomes in their GCSE's and improved opportunities in further education.
	Training opportunities through West Berkshire Consortium for young carers post 16 year olds.	To identify young carers not in education, employment and training.	2025-2028	Improved outcomes and opportunities for the young person.
	Work with young carers to co-produce a young carers identity card which will encourage them to seek support in school and other activities.	Young carer's identity card will increase opportunities to participate in their community and make social connections with their peers.	2025-2028	Young carers will be able to access opportunities they may not otherwise have been able to.

15. Monitoring Arrangements

The Carers Strategy Group will lead on delivering the strategy and define the monitoring arrangements in place. The group reports to the Senior Management Team in Adult Social Care and Children Services.

An Action plan will be developed which will run alongside the strategy. The Action Plan will reflect the 6 priorities that we have identified and how each of these will be achieved.

- The Carers Strategy Group will continue to meet quarterly. The Action plan will be reviewed at these meetings and identify any barriers or gaps. Regular updates on the Action Plan will be provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- The Carers Strategy Group will find solutions and work together with partner organisations and carers.
- Carers will be able to contribute and participate in the delivery of the strategy through the following channels:
 - unpaid carer representative who is a member of the Carers strategy group.
 - the Early Help and Prevention Lead in Children and Family Service who is a member of the Carers Strategy Group.
 - Partner agencies or organisations (voluntary or private).
- The Carers Strategy will be revised every three years (in 2028).

16. References

1. ASC Data Zone 2023/23
2. ASC Statutory Report 2022/2
3. Caring for Others Survey WBC ASC 2021/22
4. ONS 2021 Census data for unpaid Carers
5. Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021/22
6. State of Caring 2022 report p55

17. Appendix 1 - Action Plan (Delivery Plan)

Priority 1: Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support.							
	Activity	2023/24	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Lead Organisation (s)	Comments
1.1	West Berkshire and Reading Carers Partnership will continue to organise campaign events. The campaigns are to raise awareness of caring and the role of unpaid carers. Various events are organized during the National Carers Week (usually takes place in June annually), Carers Rights Day (takes place annually in November) and Young Carers Action day.	1,273 carers registered with ASC (2022/23)	Work towards 5% increase	Work towards 5% increase	Work towards 5% increase	West Berkshire and Reading Carers Partnership Adult Social Care	Aim to reduce variance between carers registered with Adult Social Care and carers on census data. i.e. identify new carers
1.2	Encourage carers who want to share their stories to do so. Stories can be shared in carer related events (with the consent of the carer).		New 2025/26 – target of 5 stories	June/Nov	June/Nov Increase	West Berkshire and Reading Carers Partnership Adult Social Care	Campaigns to align to Carers Week/Carer Rights Day.
1.3	Training package for both internal and external professionals (partners) to enable them to recognise and identify unpaid carers and where to signpost them. Organise workshops to deliver the training.		New 2025/26 – host at least one workshop New 2025/26	Increase delivery to up to 3 workshops per year	Delivery of up to 3 workshops per year	Adult Social Care	Based on resources & capacity, increase workshop delivery incrementally.
1.4	Identify and support carers from diverse communities, travellers, refugees, asylum seekers. Liaise with Berkshire Volunteer Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Community centres to reach out to 'hidden' carers.		– set baseline data	Aim for 2% increase	Aim for 2% increase	Adult Social Care Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership	To use the Office of National Statistics data to inform us about diverse communities and languages represented in West Berkshire.
1.5	Increase referral pathways for young carers from community groups and partners.	28% referrals received from WBC teams external to ERH and from external to WBC partners and organisations.	Target 32% referrals received from wider WBC teams and external partners and organisations.	Target 35% referrals received from wider WBC teams and external partners and organisations.	Target 38% referrals received from wider WBC teams and external partners and organisations.	Children's Services and partners	
1.6	Identify and support young carers affected by parental substance misuse.	0.5% young carers identified as caring for a parent with substance misuse.	Target 2% identified young carers.	Target 4% identified young carers.	Target 6% identified young carers.	Children's Services	

Priority 2: To provide information and advice to carers and young carers.							
	Activity	2023/24	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Lead Organisation (s)	Comments
1.1	Promotion of the West Berkshire Directory to residents and professionals.	7600 Directory users in 2023 Establish baseline when the current system is upgraded	Increase by 500	Increase by 500	Increase by 500	Adult Social Care	
1.2	There are plans to use the Accelerating Reform Funding grant to create a self-assessment service for unpaid carers by Summer 2025.	To clear the current backlog of unpaid carers waiting to be assessed.	New for 2025/26 – c. 35	Aim for 2% increase	Aim for 2% increase	Adult Social Care	Accelerating Reform Funding ceases in March 2025. Cascading training to substantive staff.
1.3	To provide information to young carers through the newsletter that is published quarterly. For young carers social media, Facebook, Instagram pages are updated weekly	207 Young carers currently on the mailing list	Target increase 10% of new young carers and families	Target increase 10% of new young carers and families	Target increase 10% of new young carers and families	Children's Services	
1.4	Good quality information, advice and signposting will continue to be provided by Adult Social Care, Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership and Crossroads Care Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.	ASC statutory reporting data for 2022/23 81% unpaid carers received Information/ Advice/ Signposting.	Target 85%	Target 85%	Target 85%	-West Berkshire and Reading Carers Partnership, -Crossroads Care Oxfordshire and West Berkshire -Adult Social Care	
1.5	Work with Communities to disseminate information about carers, offer advice and to ensure access from diverse communities.	Increase number of events during Carers Week aimed at providing information about carers.	Target 2 events	Target 3 events	Target 3 events	Adult Social Care	

Priority 3: Enable access to Peer Support Groups for carers and young carers.

	Activity	2023/24	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Lead Organisation (s)	Comments
1.1	Young Carers service to continue to carry out assessment of identified young carers.	48 referrals received.	Target increase 2% young carers identified.	Target increase 5% young carers identified.	Target increase 8% young carers identified.	Children's Services	
1.2	Young carers who are assessed are referred to community groups to access respite activities with other young carers.	59 young carers access clubs and activities.	Target increase 5% young carers.	Target increase 10% young carers.	Target increase 15% young carers.	Children's Services and partners	
1.3	Carers attending weekly school groups.	2 schools offer weekly carer support groups.	Increase from 2 to 5 schools across West Berkshire.	Increase by 2 schools per year.	Increase by 2 schools per year.	Children's Services	

Priority 4: Carers are supported to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.							
	Activity	2023/24	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Lead Organisation (s)	Comments
1.1	Raising awareness of the health impacts of caring. West Berkshire and Reading Partnership, General Practices in West Berkshire, Berkshire Healthcare, Adult Social Care will help reinforce the importance of carers mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.		✓	✓	✓	Adult Social Care Reading and West Berkshire Partnership.	Aligns to priority 1 – increases in number of people identifying as carers and accessing help & support.
1.2	Carers will be followed up in writing after a carers assessment with a clear outcome. The assessment should include consideration of the impact on the caring role on the carers' mental, physical emotional and overall wellbeing.	To clear the current backlog awaiting a Carers Assessment.	New for 2025/26 – c. 35	Aim for 5% increase	Aim for 5% increase	Adult Social Care	Funding ceased in March 2025. Cascading training to substantive staff.
1.3	Improve support options for carers so that they can have time for their own appointments to get their own health checks done. Providing a sitting service to allow them time to get these done (this is subject to an individual carers assessment).		✓	✓	✓	Crossroads for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Adult Social Care	
1.4	Ensuring that carers have easier access to local services that can support and contribute to their overall wellbeing. For example, Eight Bells for Mental Health, Emotional Health Academy and Time to Talk. West Berkshire directory for more details on support services for carers.		✓	✓	✓	Adult Social Care Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership Primary Care -GP Practices	Outcomes linked to Carers Assessments. Link to priority 2 – West Berkshire Directory.

Priority 4: Carers are supported to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.							
	Activity	2023/24	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Lead Organisation (s)	Comments
1.5	To explore how carers can be provided with affordable and flexible opportunities which will enable them to participate in activities which promote and contribute to the health and wellbeing.		✓	✓	✓		Link to priority 2 – West Berkshire Directory
1.6	Employers to consider and include support for carers who are in employment as part of their wellbeing strategy.		✓	✓	✓		Link to priority 1 – encourage employer to raise awareness and identify working carers e.g. link to carer stories
1.7	The effect of the cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on carers particularly those who care for those with a disability. Carers should therefore be supported to access grant funding and capital funding to help them improve their finances.		Working towards improving data collection on number of carers who contact the hub.	Set baseline of data	TBC	TBC	
1.8	Young carers physical, mental, emotional health and wellbeing is supported through early help within their community, including My Family Plans, targeted intervention within the community such as Time 2 Talk or Swings & Smiles etc.	Assessment outcomes identify support that is available for young carers within the West Berkshire community	Increase data recording of where young carers may be referred to for support to set baseline for data.	TBC	TBC	Children's Services	

Priority 5: Support Carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.						
	Activity	2023/24	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Lead Organisation (s)
1.1	Working with Commissioners in Adult Social Care to look at the current offer around respite provision for carers to enable them to access flexible short breaks and respite.	ASC Statutory reporting -an increase by 15% of carers who benefited after respite provision	Target 20%	Target 20%	Target 25%	Adult Social Care
1.2	Working in partnership with community groups to offer age-appropriate short breaks for young carers.	New baseline due to change in delivery of shortbreaks and respite activities.	Target 30 young carers referred to and accessing community activities.	Target increase to a further 40 young carers referred to and accessing community activities.	Target increase to a further 50 young carers referred to and accessing community activities.	Children's Services
1.3	Work with the disabled children's team to look at the current offer around respite provision and direct payments for parent carers.		Working towards data collection on number of carers offered respite provision and direct payments for carers	Set baseline for data	TBC	Children's Services

Priority 6: Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential.						
	Activity	2023/24	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Lead Organisation (s)
1.1	Social Care professionals to recognise carers' right to life outside caring.		✓	✓	✓	Adult Social Care
1.2	Recognise transition points –becoming a Carer, stopping a caring role, moving from being a young carer to an adult carer.		Target 5 Carers per year	Target 10 Carers per year	Target 15 Carers per year	Children's Services and Adult Services
1.3	Training opportunities for young carers aged 16+ through West Berkshire Consortium.		2 Training sessions per year	2 Training sessions per year	2 Training sessions per year	Children's Services and WBTC
1.4	Encourage young carers to fully access their education and support them to remove barriers to learning, through increased awareness of young carers' needs in schools.		4 schools per year	6 schools per year	10 schools per year	Children's Services and schools
1.5	Work with young carers to co-produce a young carers identity card which will encourage them to seek support in school and other activities.		25 young carers per year	50 young carers per year	75 young carers per year	Children's Services

Survey Responses

Carers Strategy 2025-2028 (Draft) Survey Results

The Draft Carers Strategy 2025-2028 went out to public consultation on the 7th of October 2024 for 6 weeks. The consultation closed on the 17th of November 2024. We were keen to hear your views on the draft Carers Strategy particularly our six priorities (which are outlined below) and the delivery plan. It was important to us to get your feedback to help us shape the final strategy.

Six priorities identified:

1. Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support.
2. Provide information and advice to carers and young carers.
3. Enable access to peer support groups for carers and young carers.
4. Support carers to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.
5. Support carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.
6. Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential.

We received 88 responses to the survey. Below is a breakdown of the responses:

- 96.59% from residents in West Berkshire
- 4.55% employed by West Berkshire Council
- 1.14% A West Berkshire Council Service Provider
- 4.55% other (did not specify)

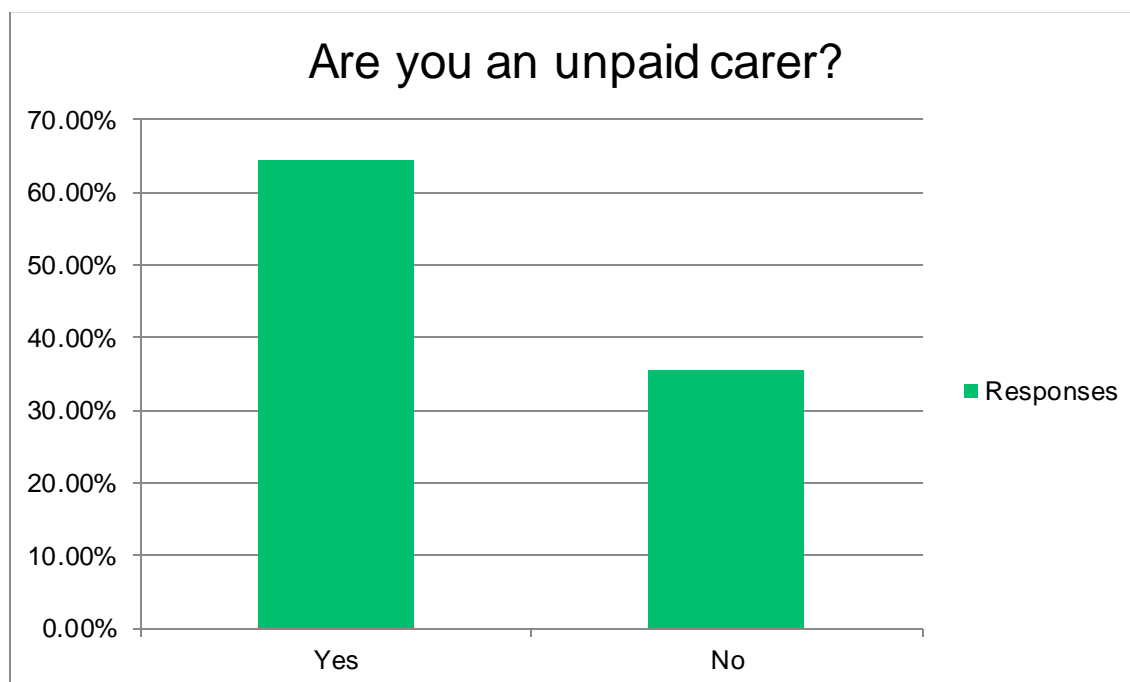
A summary (%) of responses related to the survey is presented below:

Q2. Are you an unpaid carer?

87 people answered this question.

64.37 % responded 'Yes'

35.63% responded 'No'



Q3. Do you believe the aims of the strategy strike the right level of ambition?

75 people answered this question.

73.33% responded 'Yes'

26.67% responded 'No'.

Below are some of the responses:

'The aims are common to most Carers Strategies. The proof of effectiveness is in the delivery of Services for Unpaid Carers'

'It is clearly focused and highlights existing weaknesses.'

'One can have access to something but not know how to use or do it. Signposting to a website or a charity simply doesn't help. Carers need active help to understand: What support is available, what forms to fill in, what the point of the form is, and help to fill it in'.

'West Berkshire appear to be aware of the needs and aspirations of the vast majority of care givers and recipients and with frequent consultations and discussions are constantly adjusting the framework to suit all players.'

'It all looks about right to me'.

'Unpaid carers need all support they can get, and that support should be easily accessible'.

'Additional support for unpaid carers is vital'.

'Identifying carers particularly young carers important as some carers don't recognise that they are carers.'

'It is a very positive ambition; the issue is whether it is achievable'.

'I think a lot more can be done to support unpaid carers I think they do a wonderful job and sometime could do with a break. Maybe more rest bite break could be offered of someone to take over in some case to give a break to meet with other carer maybe for a coffee. Also, someone to help with benefit claims so carers dont know what financial help is out there after giving up work to care for family members.'

'I think there are good ambitions, it is just whether there is the Staff, resources, finances to be able to carry out all the ambitions. I know from my own Carers Assessment that I never heard anything else after the assessment so no outcome. I have a carers card and that is all'.

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that our six proposed priorities will help us achieve our vision for carers in West Berkshire?

66 people answered this question.

Priorities	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support,	43.94%	34.85%	10.61%	3.03%	7.58%
Provide information and advice to carers and young carers.	46.97%	30.30%	13.64%	3.03%	6.06%
Enable access to peer support groups for carers and young carers.	42.42%	34.85%	15.15%	3.03%	4.55%
Support carers to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.	46.97%	28.79%	10.61%	4.55%	9.09%
Support carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.	54.55%	19.70%	13.64%	4.55%	7.58%
Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential	51.52%	24.24%	12.12%	4.55%	7.58%

Below are some of the responses:

'Caring is exhausting, demanding, overwhelming, stressful, all-encompassing, limiting and emotionally rewarding in equal measures and it feels like we are forgotten and taken for granted so we need support to continue to care for our loved ones and we all face different challenges as the loved ones we support are all different, in so many ways.'

'Unable to disagree, most of these areas have previously been identified and asked for by carers and practitioners. The hope is they worked up to tangible, measurable and first-class resources for support.'

'Support is vital for everyone's wellbeing.'

'All good priorities.'

'I strongly agree with these 6 priorities, however, for some carers, the groups that are available to them (such as for older carers of people with learning disabilities) are not specific to their concerns and experiences. Whilst there is a need for groups to support people, there is also a limited time for carers to be able to look after themselves, their health and wellbeing, their own appointments and hobbies as well as attending other groups as well. I can see that peer groups for young people can be more generic as they are likely to share information/guidance, but equally allowing those young people the freedom to be children.'

'They are central to the needs of carers particularly at a time of fund cutting.'

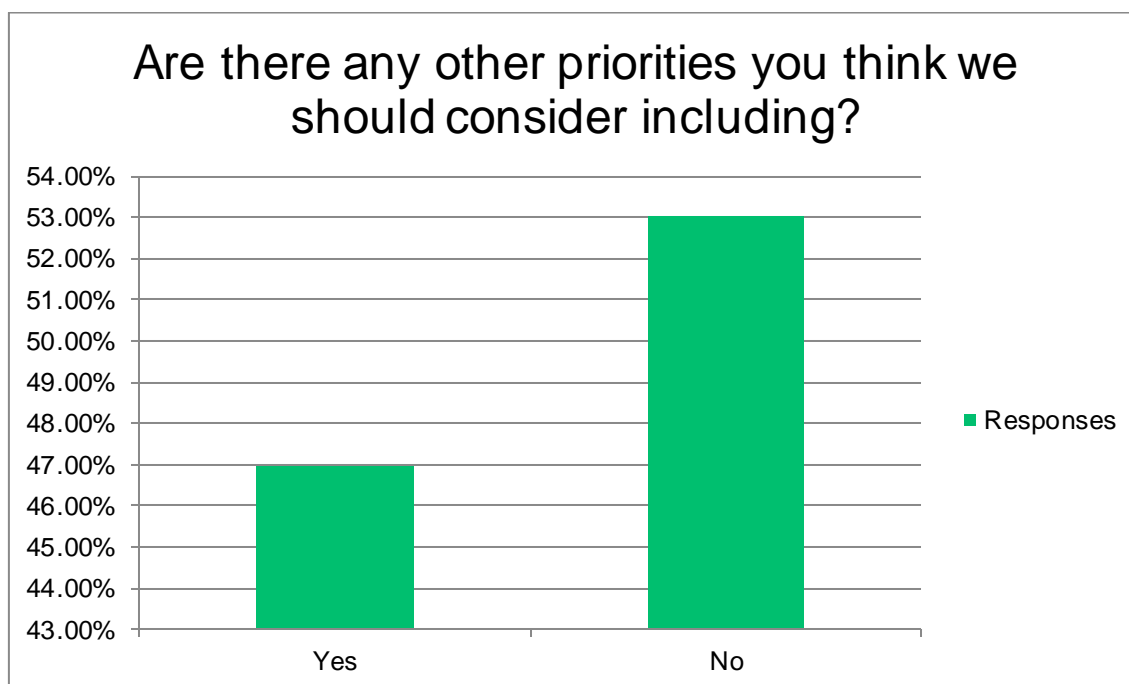
'This survey and forthcoming discussion is proof positive that all aspects of the system are being thoroughly examined and discussed as an ongoing matter for achieving all the goals.'

Q5. Are there any other priorities you think we should consider including?

66 people answered this question.

46.97% responded 'Yes'

53.03% responded 'No'



Q6. Please tell us what other priorities you would like to see included and why.

29 out of the 31 people who responded 'Yes' to Q5, answered this question.

Below are some of the responses:

'The priorities themselves are fine, but it's not engaging Carers & not addressing the ongoing issues they face e.g.' -the anxiety they live with daily, worrying about what will happen when they are no longer able to care. local Carers discount card would encourage more Carers to make themselves visible.'

'Review and simplify the access to support'.

'Young carers must not be denied education opportunities, therefore support if required is essential'.

'All care should be provided by either local or central government. Unpaid caring is destroying people future'.

'Specific recognition of older carers and their needs. Specific recognition of lifetime carers and their needs. Clearer recognition and support requirements of key stage events which can be classed as 'moving on' some may well be life changing'.

'Support with mental health and finance. Many of us face challenges with earning enough to survive because we are so limited by our caring responsibilities. It would be beneficial to have some subsidies on things like Council Tax, support with energy bills and basic day to day living needs.'

'Making access to help easier'.

'Continuity & hidden (nor aware of) support'

'Everyone assumes an unpaid carer is older I have never got to meet other carers of my age with young adults that are disabled, unless I've met parents through education. Also, not all carers can get someone to look after who they care for to attend a coffee morning, or an evening event'.

'Accessibility to information that is not just geared to the elderly or referring people to national charities who may not have any local presence'.

'You need to see the world from a carer's perspective and to understand the frustration and the frustration and inevitable loneliness experienced'.

'Enough social workers to engage with carers, each identified carer to be given a named social worker to support them'.

'Easier access to respite care for short periods or a sitting service for a day or day/night'.

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed actions will help us to achieve our priorities? You can read more about our proposed actions in our draft Carers Strategy 2024-2027.

60 people answered this question.

Priorities	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Raise awareness and increase the identification of carers (including hidden carers) to enable them to access help and support	36.67%	36.67%	15.00%	3.33%	8.33%
Provide information and advice to carers and young carers.	31.67%	41.67%	18.33%	3.33%	5.00%
Enable access to peer support groups for carers and young carers.	31.67%	36.67%	23.33%	3.33%	5.00%
Support carers to improve their physical, mental, emotional and overall wellbeing.	33.33%	31.67%	20.00%	10.00%	5.00%
Support carers and young carers to take breaks from caring.	38.33%	33.33%	18.33%	6.67%	3.33%
Support a life outside caring to enable carers and young carers to achieve their potential.	35.00%	33.33%	20.00%	6.67%	5.00%

Below are some of the responses:

'The proposals are laudable; affordability is the question'.

'Helping young carers is crucial - they don't necessarily have the detachment and ability to say "no" on their own'.

'I agree that reaching out to diverse communities is important and also peer support groups can be really helpful'.

'They are all important hence my responses'.

'They are all very good ambitions and seem to cover a range of the needs of carers and young carers'.

'How effective these steps will be remains, of course, to be seen but none of them strike me as unreasonable or unachievable. If I could be certain that they would have the desired effect I would have put "strongly agree".'

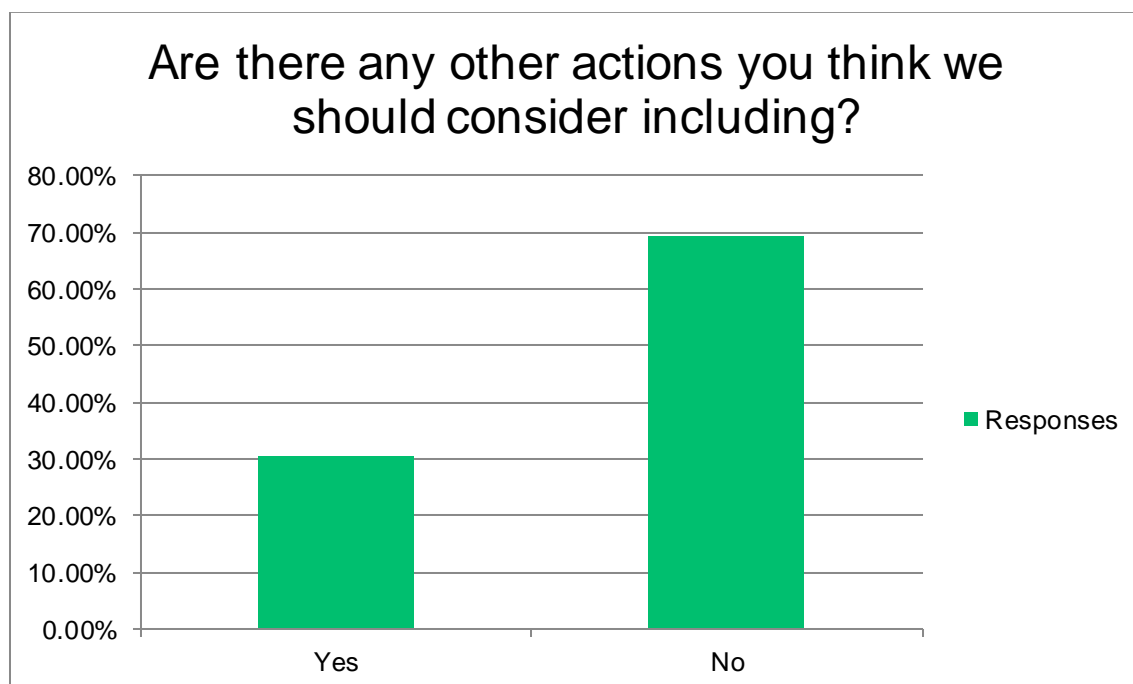
'So far as a carer for two people and trying to work full time I have had very limited support'.

Q8. Are there any other actions you think we should consider including?

16 out of the 18 people who responded 'Yes' to Q7, answered this question.

30.51% responded 'Yes'

69.49 % responded 'No'



Q9. Please tell us what other action you would like to see included and why.

16 people answered this question.

Below are some of the responses:

'It would be good to have a "shop front" or Carers community cafe where there are staff to have an informal chat with, get advice, have a coffee, meet other Carers etc'.

'Support groups for couples to attend together to discuss how they can help each other'.

'Actually, implementing the support carers desperately need'.

'Working with a broader range of other counties/councils. E.g., what about young carers who are at school in WB but who live just over the border in Hampshire? It's too broken up'.

'All I can say is I hide away in my world. So somehow need people to draw me out of this situation. Feel alone'.

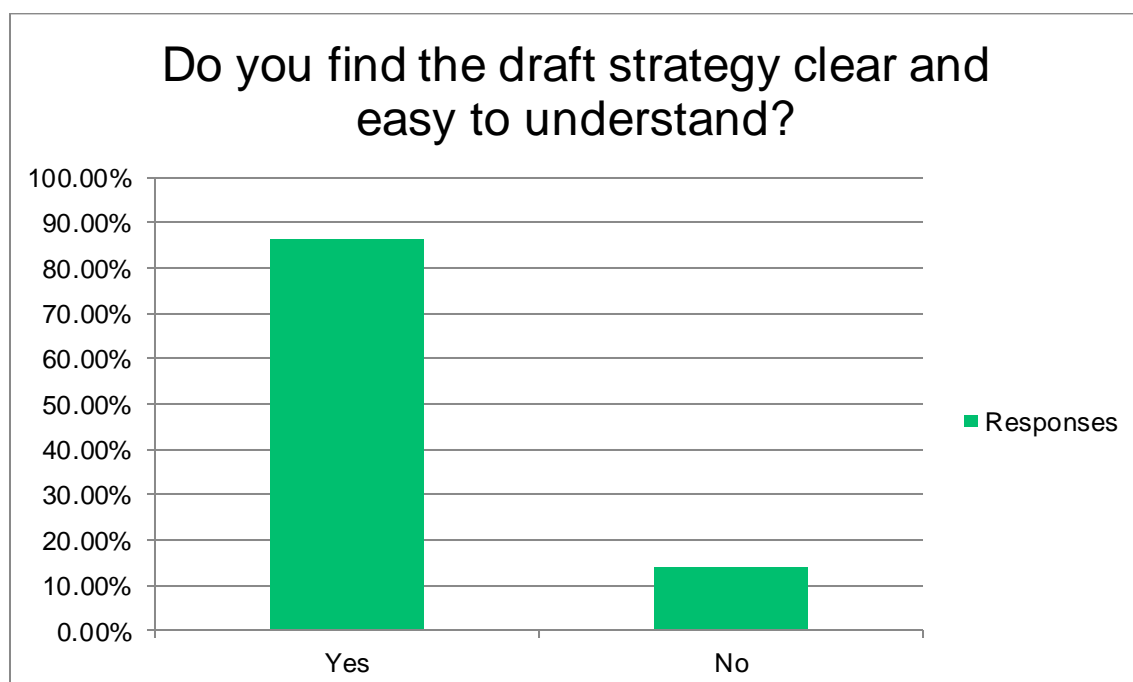
*'More emphasis on really finding out what the reality is like for carers.
'Carers often don't know where to seek support it's a minefield and overwhelming for already exhausted people. More pushing of information from GPs, other services etc'.*

Q10. Do you find the draft strategy clear and easy to understand?

58 people answered this question.

86.21% responded 'Yes'

13.79% responded 'No'



Q11. Do you have any further comments?

34 people answered this question.

Below are some of the comments from unpaid carers who answered this question:

'Need to deliver concrete actions and funding to allow carers to have short and longer breaks.'

'The additional barriers to support for carers and those needing care who live in rural parts of West Berks are significant.'

'I think young carers are particularly important to support as when I was at school in the eighties, I felt there was no one I could talk to about my mum and dad's mental health problems.'

'It is an impressive draft and should be commended'.

Don't make carers have to keep explaining their situation to get support or help'.

'Help carers help themselves.'

Appendix

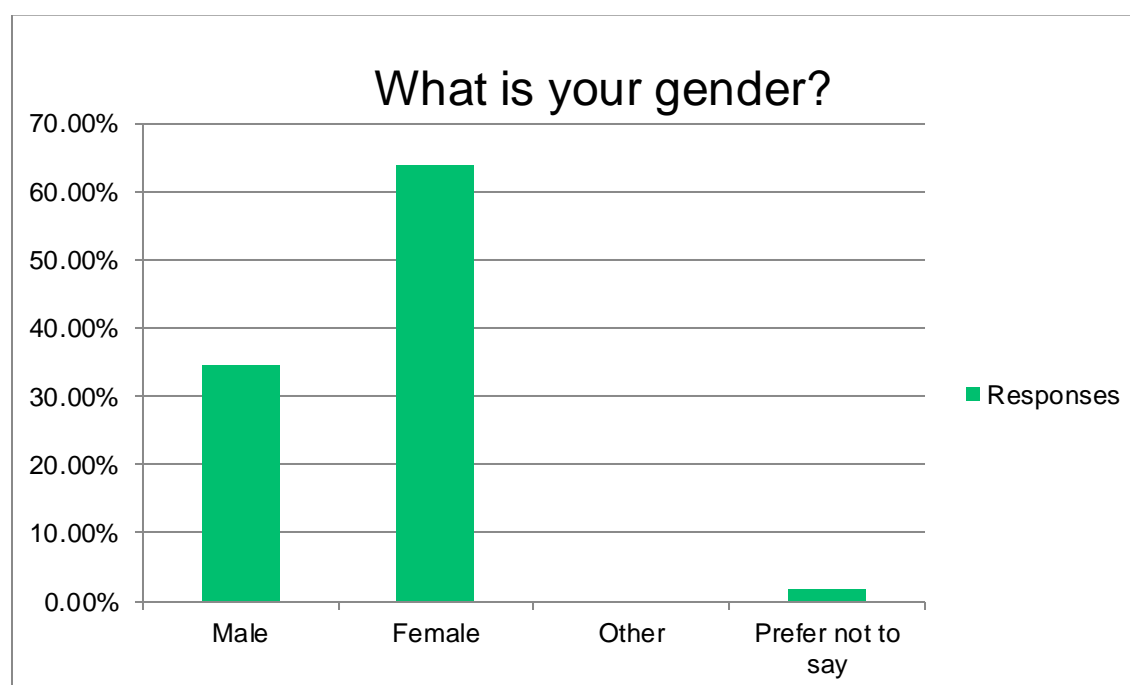
Methodology

As already mentioned, the survey was open for a period of 6 weeks from 7th October 2024 to 17th November 2024. The survey was available in printed form on requests. It was communicated through social media posts, emails, residents' bulletins and internal communications at West Berkshire Council.

Respondent Profile

Q12. What is your gender?

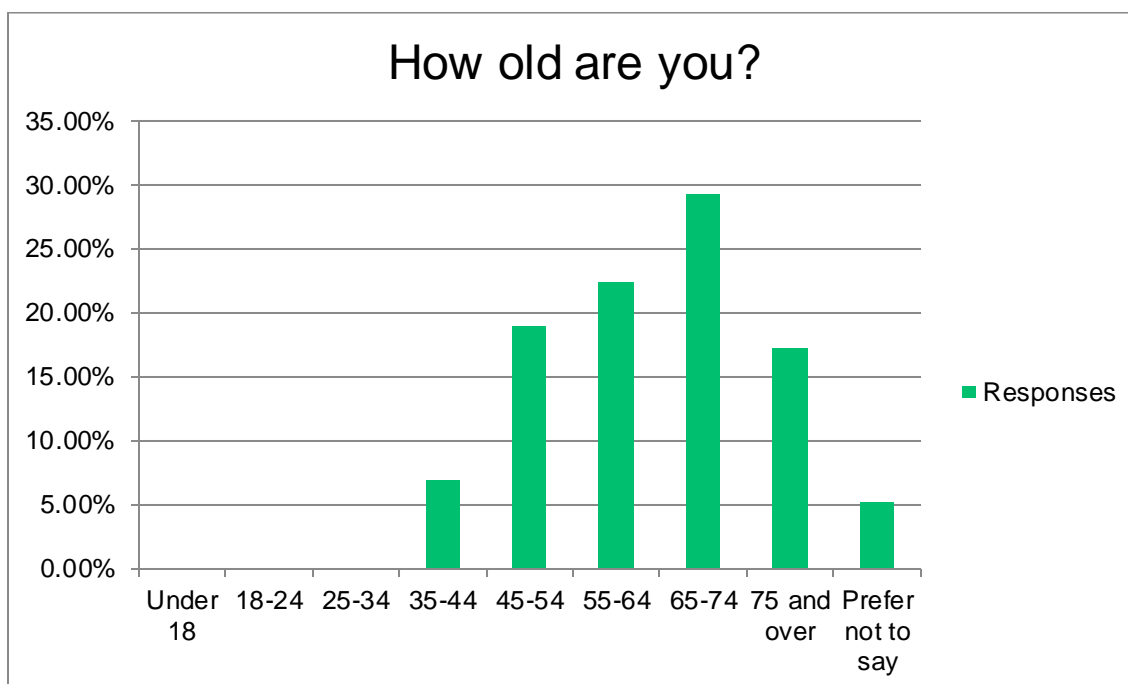
58 answered the question,
34.48% are 'Male'
63.79 are 'Female'
1.72% prefer not to say.



Q13. What is your age?

58 people answered this question.

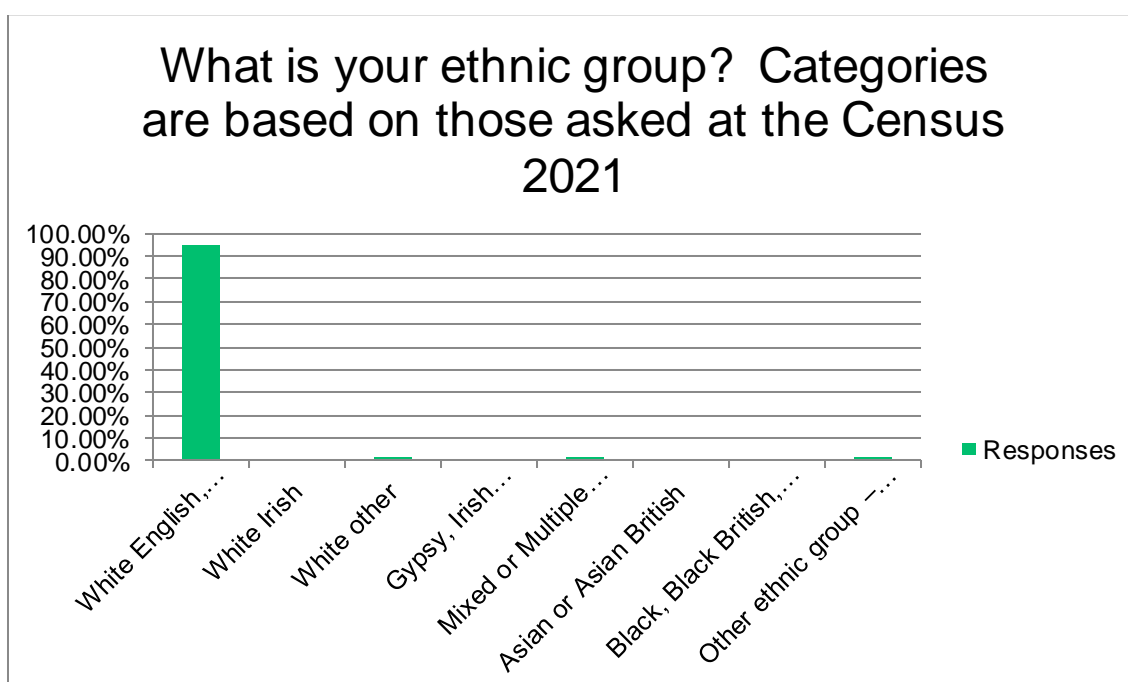
Under 18 yrs	0.00%
18-24 yrs	0.00%
25-34 yrs	0.00%
35-44 yrs	6.90%
45-54 yrs	18.97%
55-64 yrs	22.41%
65-74 yrs	29.31%
75 and over	17.24%
Prefer not to say	5.17%



Q16. What is your ethnic group? Categories are based on those asked at the Census 2021

54 people answered this question.

White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	94.44%
White Irish	0.00%
White Other	1.85%
Gypsy, Irish Traveller or Roma	0.00%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	1.85%
Asian or Asian British	0.00%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	0.00%
Other Ethnic Groups; please specify	1.85%

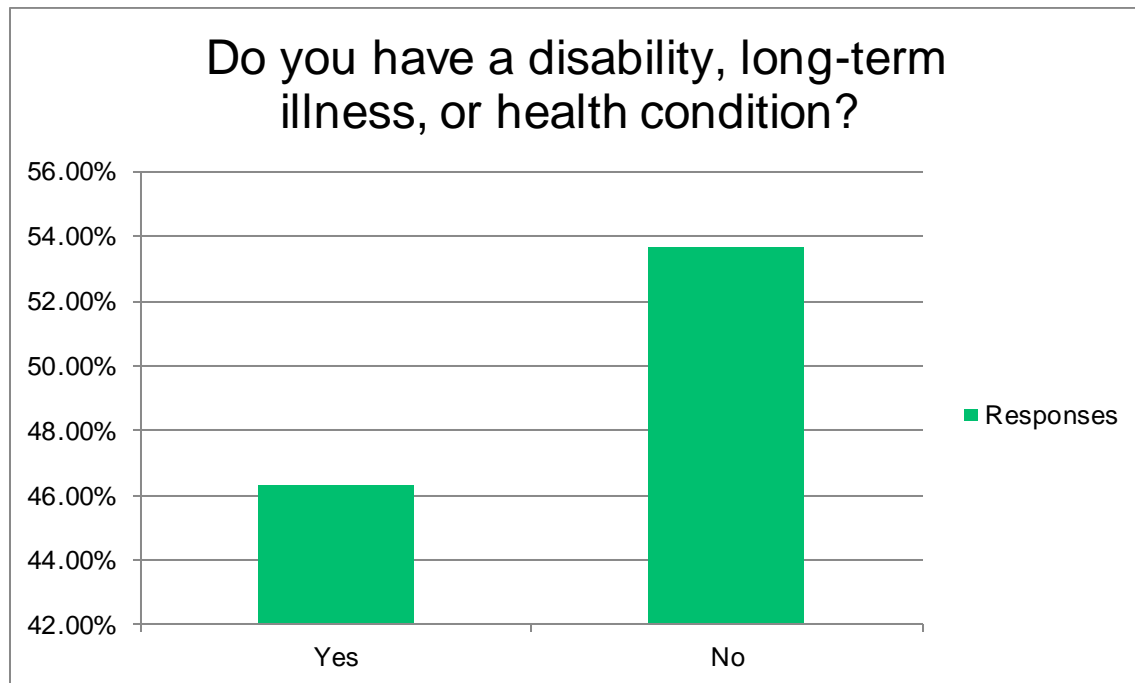


Q17. Do you have a disability, long-term illness, or health condition.

54 people answered this question

46.30% responded 'Yes'

53.70% responded 'No'



Executive – 22 May 2025

Item 10 – Member Questions

To follow

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