

# Meeting of West Berkshire District Council

**Thursday 18 July 2024**

***Summons and Agenda***

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To: All Members of the Council

*You are requested to attend a meeting of*  
**WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
*to be held in the*  
**COUNCIL OFFICES, MARKET STREET,  
NEWBURY**

on  
**Thursday 18 July 2024**  
**at 7.00pm**



Sarah Clarke  
Service Director – Strategy & Governance  
West Berkshire District Council

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 10 July 2024

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## **AGENDA**

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### **Part I**

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any). **(Pages 7 - 8)**

2. **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman to report on functions attended since the last meeting and other matters of interest to Members. **(Pages 9 - 10)**

3. **MINUTES**

The Chairman to sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 May 2024. **(Pages 11 - 20)**



## Agenda - Council to be held on Thursday, 18 July 2024 (continued)

### 4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' [Code of Conduct](#). **(Pages 21 - 22)**

### 5. **PETITIONS**

Councillors may present any petition which they have received. These will normally be referred to the appropriate body without discussion. **(Pages 23 - 24)**

### 6. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the [Council's Constitution](#). **(Pages 25 - 26)**

### 7. **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

The Council to agree any changes to the membership of Committees. **(Pages 27 - 28)**

### 8. **MOTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

To note the following response to a Motion which had been presented to a previous Council meeting:

- Response to the Motion from Councillor Heather Codling on the Support for Care Experienced People Motion, Item 11, Executive, 23 May 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the Council's website. **(Pages 29 - 30)**

### 9. **LICENSING COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Licensing Committee met on 8 July 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the [Council's website](#). **(Pages 31 - 32)**

### 10. **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Personnel Committee met on 2 July 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the [Council's website](#).

### 11. **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Governance Committee met on 16 July 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the [Council's website](#).



**12. DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council the District Planning Committee has not met.

**13. SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Scrutiny Commission met on 17 July 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the [Council's website](#).

**14. HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Health Scrutiny Committee met on 11 June 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the [Council's website](#).

**15. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Health and Wellbeing Board met on 11 July 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the [Council's website](#).

**16. JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Joint Public Protection Committee met on 10 June 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the [Council's website](#).

**17. MONITORING OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 - CONDUCT AND ETHICS (C4559)**

Purpose: To provide the annual report on matters relating to standards and conduct, and to bring to the attention of Members a summary of complaints or other problems within West Berkshire. The report highlights that standards of conduct by councillors in West Berkshire remains high. **(Pages 33 - 42)**

**18. GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT - 2023/24 (C4574)**

Purpose: To provide a summary of key areas that the Governance Committee has considered during the Municipal Year 2023-24 as well as some of the actions and changes that have occurred due to the Committee's activities. **(Pages 43 - 48)**

**Agenda - Council to be held on Thursday, 18 July 2024 (continued)**

**19. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2023/24 (C4556)**

Purpose: The Annual Scrutiny report for 2023/24 provides a summary of the work of the Scrutiny Commission, and Health Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. **(Pages 49 - 66)**

**20. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 (C4557)**

Purpose: The Annual Report provides a summary of the work of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board in 2023/24. It outlines progress made in working towards the aims and objectives of the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Berkshire West and implementation of the Delivery Plan for West Berkshire. It demonstrates how the Board has continued to assess the health needs of the local population. It also shows how the Board has delivered in terms of integration of Health and Social Care through the Better Care Fund. **(Pages 67 - 96)**

**21. NOTICES OF MOTION**

Please note that the list of Motions is shown under Item 21 in the agenda pack. **(Pages 97 - 98)**

**22. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by Members of the Council in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the [Council's Constitution](#). **(Pages 99 - 100)**

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



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Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 1 – Apologies for Absence**

Verbal Item

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Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 2 – Chairman’s Remarks**

Verbal Item

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# Agenda Item 3.

## DRAFT

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

## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

**THURSDAY, 9 MAY 2024**

**Councillors Present:** Adrian Abbs, Antony Amirtharaj, Phil Barnett, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Jeff Brooks, Nick Carter, Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Martin Colston, Jeremy Cottam, Iain Cottingham, Laura Coyle, Carolyne Culver, Paul Dick, Lee Dillon, Billy Drummond (Chairman), Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, Ross Mackinnon, David Marsh, Biyi Oloko, Justin Pemberton, Vicky Poole, Christopher Read, Matt Shakespeare, Richard Somner, Stephanie Steevenson, Joanne Stewart, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor, Tony Vickers (Vice-Chairman) and Howard Woollaston

**Also Present:** Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director - Children and Family Services), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director - Place), Sarah Clarke (Service Director (Strategy and Governance)), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Councillor Alan Macro (Via Zoom), Honorary Alderman Adrian Edwards, Honorary Alderman Tony Linden, Honorary Alderman Gordon Lundie, Honorary Alderman Graham Pask, Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles, Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Jake Carpenter (Group Executive (Cons)) and Benjamin Ryan (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Jeremy Cottam (following Agenda Item 5), Councillor Clive Hooker, Councillor Janine Lewis, Councillor Geoff Mayes, Councillor Erik Pattenden, Councillor Martha Vickers, Honorary Alderman Paul Bryant, Honorary Alderman Keith Chopping, Honorary Alderman Hilary Cole, Honorary Alderman Rick Jones, Honorary Alderman Mollie Lock, and Honorary Alderman Alan Law

## PART I

### 98. Chairman's Remarks

Councillor Jeremy Cottam expressed gratitude for a successful year, thanking Members for their respect and support. He commended the efforts of West Berkshire Council staff, noting his visits to various departments, resource centres, libraries and care homes in the lead up to Christmas and at other times of the year. He praised the community's participation in activity across the district, highlighting the RAF Welford memorial service.

Councillor Cottam highlighted events he had attended, these included events held by:

- Time to Talk: which provided mental health support for children and young adults up to the age of 21.
- Eight Bells: mental health charity primarily serving Newbury.
- Daisy's Dream: which provided a crucial role in supporting children in bereavement.

Councillor Cottam expressed deep gratitude to his wife, Mrs Lourdes Cottam, for her unwavering support throughout the year. He extended thanks to Ms Melanie Booth, who stepped in during a critical time and provided valuable assistance for the first few months

## COUNCIL - 9 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

of his tenure. He also congratulated Mr Ben Ryan for his hard work and transition into the new position of support officer.

### 99. Presentations

The Chairman made a presentation to Mrs Cottam as a thank you for her support over the past year.

### 100. Election of the Chairman for the Municipal Year 2024/2025

The Chairman asked for nominations for the position of Chairman of the Council. Councillor Martin Colston nominated Councillor Billy Drummond for the position of Chairman. This nomination was seconded by Councillor Phil Barnett. There were no further nominations for the position.

Councillor Colston, spoke in support of Councillor Drummond and highlighted his 21 years of service at West Berkshire Council (The Council), 24 years on Greenham Parish Council, and 5 years on Newbury Town Council. Councillor Colston complimented Councillor Drummond's dedication, including his resilience as a stroke survivor and his positive impact on the community. He recalled working closely with Councillor Drummond when he was Mayor of Newbury, noting his tireless work for his residents and his involvement in many outside bodies. He praised him as a role model for stroke survivors and expressed confidence in his ability to bring warmth and enthusiasm to the role of Chairman, lighting up official visits with his beaming smile.

Councillor Phil Barnett noted Councillor Drummond's tireless work for residents and his preference for face-to-face interactions with officers. The Councillor detailed Councillor Drummond's habit of working 365 days a year and expressed certainty that his commitment to the position of Chairman would be 100%.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Billy Drummond be elected as Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2024/2025.

Councillor Drummond (The Chairman) read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Chairman thanked all Members for their support and Councillors Colston and Barnett for their kind words. The Chairman emphasised the honour and responsibility of the role, committing to fairness in all meetings and to promote West Berkshire as a great place to live, work, and enjoy life. He acknowledged the trust placed in him and promised to represent the Council with dedication and enthusiasm.

The Chairman expressed gratitude to Councillor Cottam for his outstanding service as Chairman of the Council and acknowledged Councillor Cottam's dedication and support, highlighting his busy schedule, as well as the honour of working alongside him. The Chairman wished Councillor Cottam the best of luck in his future endeavours.

### 101. Election of the Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2024/2025

The Chairman nominated Councillor Tony Vickers for the position of Vice-Chairman. This nomination was seconded by Councillor Colston.

There were no further nominations for the position.

The Chairman spoke in support of Councillor Vickers, highlighting his extensive experience and dedication to the community. He shared that Councillor Vickers moved to West Berkshire in 1980 and had been an active member of the Liberal Party since 1964. The Chairman noted Councillor Vickers military background and his political career. The Chairman detailed Councillor Vickers professional background, noting his involvement in land value taxation research and his role as CEO of a small charity. Councillor Vickers

## COUNCIL - 9 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

previous tenure as Vice-Chairman in 2004-2005 was highlighted, along with his consistent presence on planning committees. His academic contributions as a part-time lecturer and researcher at Kingston University's School of Surveying and Planning were also mentioned.

Councillor Colston, expressed similar sentiments, emphasising Councillor Vickers dedication to public service and his knack for inspiring others. He mentioned first meeting Councillor Vickers when he was Chairman of the local Liberal Democrat Party in 2017 and quickly becoming involved in local politics under his mentorship. He praised the Councillor's tireless efforts to improve the community and his ability to engage others in civic activities.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Vickers be elected as Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2024/2025.

The Vice-Chairman read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Councillor Vickers expressed his gratitude to the Members for their support. He thanked the Chairman and Councillor Colston for their kind words. He remarked on the significance of waiting 20 years to resume the role of Vice-Chairman, reflecting on his previous tenure in 2004-2005 before the party lost control to the Conservatives. He acknowledged the honour of being elected and promised to support the Chairman diligently, emphasising the importance of the role as a civic leader in West Berkshire, a community he had been part of for more than half his life. He concluded by thanking Members for their trust and pledged to fulfil his duties to the best of his ability.

*(Councillor Cottam left the meeting at 19:32 pm).*

### 102. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following point of clarification:

**Capital Strategy Financial Years 2024 to 2034** – Councillor Denise Gaines gave clarification on the pothole reporting figures provided. The 1881 potholes reported in January and February 2024 was ten times the amount reported for the same period in 2022 and not 2023. She added that the 2024 figures were double those reported in 2023.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2024 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 103. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

### 104. Election of the Strong Leader of the Council

Councillor Lee Dillon nominated Councillor Jeff Brooks for the position. This nomination was seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines.

There were no further nominations.

Councillor Dillon congratulated the newly elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman and thanked officers and colleagues for their support during his tenure as Leader. He highlighted Councillor Brooks' extensive experience, including his roles as the last Leader of Berkshire County Council, Leader of the Opposition, and Deputy Leader. Councillor Brooks was credited with driving the Council's Strategy and making the Council more customer focused. Councillor Dillon praised Councillor Brooks' dedication, political support, and pastoral care, wishing him success in his new role.

## COUNCIL - 9 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

Councillor Gaines described Councillor Brooks as a dedicated and experienced politician. She highlighted the Councillor's tenacity, resilience, and ability to get things done, emphasising his suitability for the leadership role given the financial challenges and resource limitations being faced by the Council.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon congratulated the newly elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman and extended his congratulations to Councillor Brooks. He acknowledged the long apprenticeship Councillor Brooks had served as Leader of the Opposition and was relieved that the Council had clarity on leadership. He emphasised that the role of the Opposition was to keep the Administration 'on its toes' and wished the new Leader success, while expressing hope that the Administration would prioritise services for residents over national political debates. Councillor Mackinnon concluded by urging the Administration to work diligently and effectively for the benefit of residents, expressing his hope that the Council would see positive changes under the new leadership.

Councillor David Marsh added his congratulations on behalf of the Minority Group to the newly elected Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and to Councillor Brooks. He noted that the Green Party did not support the concept of a Strong Leader of the Council, preferring a more democratic committee system. However, he acknowledged Councillor Brooks' performance in the acting role, particularly praising him for his involvement in improving processes relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for the benefit of residents.

Councillor Adrian Abbs highlighted his positive interactions with Councillor Brooks and expressed confidence in his leadership. He mentioned the importance of open-mindedness and collaboration, hoping that the new Leader would be receptive to proposals and input from all Members.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Jeff Brooks be elected as Strong Leader of the Council.

### 105. **Appointment of the Executive by the Leader of the Council for the 2024/2025 Municipal Year**

Councillor Jeff Brooks began his address by expressing his gratitude for being appointed as Leader. He emphasised that a Strong Leader was only as effective as the team behind them. He thanked the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, praising their dedication as he looked forward to working with them. The Councillor recalled his past experiences in leadership roles and the challenges faced, highlighting the importance of teamwork and resilience. He reflected on the financial challenges the Council faced, noting that the Administration needed to achieve significant savings in a shorter period compared to previous years. Despite these challenges, he emphasised the achievements of the Council in delivering on various Manifesto commitments, such as:

- Neighbourhood letters for planning applications;
- Community Forums;
- Addressing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) issue;
- Training sessions for Newbury Football Club at Faraday Road;
- Reduction of temporary workers to achieve cost savings;
- An Opposition Member chairing Scrutiny;
- Delivery of 275 affordable homes;
- Public involvement in the Environment Advisory Groups;
- Off-street electric vehicle (EV) charging contracts;

## COUNCIL - 9 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

- Foster care recruitment programmes.

The Councillor acknowledged the hard work of officers under difficult circumstances and emphasised the need for cultural changes within the Council to improve service delivery.

Councillor Brooks, Leader of the Council (and Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Communications), announced the appointment of Members to the Executive for 2024/2025 as follows:

Councillor Denise Gaines – Deputy Leader of Council & Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

Councillor Iain Cottingham - Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

Councillor Louise Sturgess - Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration

Councillor Patrick Clark - Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Councillor Heather Codling - Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services

Councillor Nigel Foot - Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport, and Countryside

Councillor Stuart Gourley - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways

Councillor Vicky Poole - Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme

Councillor Lee Dillon - Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Community Engagement

### 106. **Appointment of and Allocation of Seats on Committees for the 2024/25 Municipal Year**

The Council considered the report (Agenda Item 10) regarding the appointment and allocation of seats for the next Municipal Year in accordance with the duty under section 15 of the Local Government Housing Act 1989, to ensure that this reflected the latest political make-up of the Council which was an annual consideration.

The report sought agreement of the Council's Policy Framework for 2024/25 as set out in paragraph 5.22 of the report, reflective of the Policies reserved for Full Council.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines.

- "That Council notes that under paragraph 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice has been received that the Members set out in paragraph 5.1 are to be regarded as Members of the Liberal Democrat Group, Conservative Group and Minority Opposition Group respectively.
- That the Council agrees to the appointment of the various Committees and to the number of places on each as set out in Table A, at paragraph 5.4.
- That the Council agrees to the allocation of seats to the Political Groups in accordance with section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1989 as set out in Table B at paragraph 5.14 of the report.
- That the number of substitutes on each of the Committees and Commissions be as set out in Table C, at paragraph 5.17.
- In respect of the District and Area Planning Committees, the substitute Members are all drawn from Members representing wards within the Committee's area who are not appointed to the Committee. Where substitutes attend the District Planning meeting,

## COUNCIL - 9 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

they need to be drawn from the same Area Planning meeting as the Member they are substituting for.

- That the Council approves the appointment of Members to the Committees as set out in Appendix A and the appointments to Task Groups and Panels set out in Appendix B which are in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups. Council notes the Membership of the bodies set out in Appendix C.
- That the Council, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 as amended, agrees that the Council's Policy Framework for 2024/25 be as set out in paragraph 5.22 of this report, and that any necessary amendments be made to the Council's Constitution.
- That the Council notes that other plans, policies and strategies requiring approval which are not included in the approved Policy Framework and which are not otherwise reserved by law to Council, will be the responsibility of the Council's Executive in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.
- That the Council notes that Paragraph 6.2 of Article 6 of the Constitution will be amended to reflect any changes made to the Executive by the Leader of the Council at the Annual Council meeting.
- That the appointment of two non-voting co-opted Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance Committee as detailed in Appendix A.
- To re-appoint three Independent Persons (standards) namely Lindsey Appleton, Mike Wall and Alan Penrith, and to appoint Simon Carey as an Independent Person (Audit) to focus on the risk and audit functions of the Governance Committee.
- To note the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in Appendix C.
- That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the changes to the number of Members of the Council and following the appointments to Committees.
- Council is asked to note the Council Bodies Rules as detailed at Part 6 of the Constitution, that are available via the link at Appendix E".

Councillor Brooks made the following changes and clarifications to the proposed appointments:

- Environment Advisory Group: Councillor Vicky Poole would step down as a substitute. Councillor Geoff Mayes would take her place.
- Corporate Parenting Panel: Councillor Justin Pemberton would replace Councillor Billy Drummond, and the substitute would be Councillor Martha Vickers.
- The Safer Streets Champion: Councillor Stephanie Steevenson would replace Councillor Vicky Poole.
- District Planning Committee: Councillor Denise Gaines to replace Councillor Martin Colston.

Councillor Brooks discussed the roles of Member Champions, expressing the need for these roles to be formalised within the Council's Constitution. He praised the work of current Champions, such as Councillor Steevenson (Armed Forces Champion) and Councillor Martha Vickers (Green Champion), but highlighted the lack of job descriptions, terms of reference, and support for these roles. He proposed that these roles should be



## COUNCIL - 9 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

enshrined in the Constitution, with clear expectations and annual reports on their achievements.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon proposed an amendment:

- District Planning Committee: Councillor Dennis Benneyworth would step down as a Member, Councillor Howard Woollaston would become a full Member instead of being a substitute, and Councillor Paul Dick would be a substitute.

Councillor Marsh proposed an amendment:

- Member Development Group: Councillor Clive Taylor to be added.
- Standing Advisory Commission for Religious Education: Councillor Taylor to be added.
- Corporate Parenting Panel: Councillor Marsh to be added.

Councillor Marsh expressed support for the new Executive team and the proposal to formalise the Champion roles.

A point of order was raised by Councillor Howard Woollaston regarding the allocation of seats, specifically questioning the proportionate split between the Administration, main opposition and minority parties. The Monitoring Officer explained that the allocations were determined by a sequential test and detailed in the body of the report, ensuring they were in accordance with the approved principles.

Councillor Brooks proposed approval of the recommendations including the amendments proposed to the Committees and this was seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines.

The Motion was put to vote, and Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the recommendations including the amendments tabled to the Committees and Safer Streets Champion.

### 107. Membership of Outside Bodies

The Council considered the report (Agenda Item 11) which sought approval of the annual nominations to the following Outside Bodies:

- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel
- Local Government Association General Assembly

**MOTION** proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines.

“That the Council

Approve the appointments for the Municipal Year 2024/25, in accordance with Appendix A, of Member representatives to the following outside bodies:

- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority – Councillors Jeff Brooks, Billy Drummond, Owen Jeffrey and Dennis Benneyworth.
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel – Councillor Stephanie Steevenson, with Councillor Jeremy Cottam the alternate Member.

Council was also asked to note the appointment of Member representatives to the Local Government Association General Assembly - Councillors Jeff Brooks, Lee Dillon, Denise Gaines and Ross Mackinnon”.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

**108. Member Development Programme 2024/2025**

The Council considered the report (Agenda Item 12) which sought adoption of the Member Development Programme for 2024/2025.

**Motion:** proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Vicky Poole.

“That the Council

Agree the proposed Member Development Programme for 2024/25.

Authorise the Service Director – Strategy and Governance to regularly review and amend the Programme where necessary throughout the Municipal Year to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose”.

Councillor Brooks emphasised the importance of continuous training and development for Members, suggesting the inclusion of digital and on-demand training methods. He stressed the need for flexible and accessible training options.

Councillor Joanne Stewart raised a concern about the upcoming Scrutiny of Adult Social Care session, noting the short notice.

Councillor Adrian Abbs supported the transformation program, advocating for digital training resources that could be accessed as needed, particularly in the event of a by-election.

Councillor Biyi Oloko congratulated the newly appointed Members and raised a concern that the date for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion session was to be confirmed. He sought assurance that it would be scheduled promptly.

Councillor Carlyne Culver responded to the point raised on the Scrutiny of Adult Social Care training, she committed to recording the session for those unable to attend and addressing any concerns Members might have in advance.

Councillor Poole praised the comprehensive nature of last year's Member Development Programme and expressed eagerness to work with the Member Development Group.

Councillor Brooks thanked Members for their contributions and reiterated the importance of ongoing review and adaptation of the training programme to ensure it remained effective and relevant.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

**109. Licensing Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the Licensing Committee had not met.

**110. Personnel Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the Personnel Committee had not met.

**111. Governance Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the Governance Committee had met on 16 April 2024.

**112. District Planning Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the District Planning Committee had not met.

**COUNCIL - 9 MAY 2024 - MINUTES**

**113. Scrutiny Commission**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the Scrutiny Commission had met on 25 April 2024.

**114. Health Scrutiny Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the Health Scrutiny Committee had not met.

**115. Health and Wellbeing Board**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the Health and Wellbeing Board had met on 2 May 2024.

**116. Joint Public Protection Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last ordinary meeting, the Joint Public Protection Committee had not met.

*(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 8:10 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....

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Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 4 – Declarations of Interest**

Verbal Item

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Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 5 – Petitions**

Verbal Item

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Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 6 – Public Questions**

To Follow

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Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 7 – Membership of Committees**

Verbal Item

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Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 8 – Motions from previous meetings**

To note the following response to a Motion which had been presented to a previous Council meeting:

- Response to the Motion from Councillor Heather Codling on the Support for Care Experienced People Motion – Item 11, Executive, 23 May 2024. A copy of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Democratic Services or via the Council's website.

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Council – 18 July 2024

**Item 9 – Licensing Committee**

**Item 10 – Personnel Committee**

**Item 11 – Governance Committee**

**Item 12 – District Planning Committee**

**Item 13 – Scrutiny Commission**

**Item 14 – Health Scrutiny Committee**

**Item 15 – Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Item 16 – Joint Public Protection Committee**

Verbal Items

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# Monitoring Officer’s Annual Report 2023/24 – Conduct and Ethics

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	18 July 2024
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Jeff Brooks
<b>Report Author:</b>	Sarah Clarke
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C4559

## 1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the annual report on matters relating to standards and conduct and to bring to the attention of Members a summary of complaints or other problems within West Berkshire. The report highlights that standards of conduct by councillors in West Berkshire remains high.

## 2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the content of the report, which will also be circulated to all Parish/Town Councils in the District for information.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial issues arising from this report. However the costs associated with external investigations may lead to a budget pressure.
<b>Human Resource:</b>	None
<b>Legal:</b>	There are no legal issues arising from this report. The matters covered by this report are generally requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 in so far as appropriate and the Localism Act 2011 and its supporting regulations.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	The benefits of this process are the maintenance of the Council’s credibility and good governance by a high standard

	of ethical behaviour. The threats are the loss of credibility of the Council if standards fall. Adherence to the requirements of the Code of Conduct also reduce the risk of the Council’s decisions being subject to legal challenge.			
<b>Property:</b>	None			
<b>Policy:</b>	None			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Health Impact:</b>		X		
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		

<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>		X		
<b>Core Business:</b>		X		
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Finance & Governance Group			

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report is the Monitoring Officer's annual report for the Governance Committee, which will be presented to Full Council on July. The report will also be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils.
- 4.2 The key findings identified in the report are:
- (a) Standards of ethical conduct across the district remain good.
  - (b) The number of gifts and hospitality declared by officers is on a par with pre-Covid numbers, although there has been a reduction in the number of gifts declared by Members.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.1 The Localism Act 2011 made fundamental changes to the system of regulation of the standards of conduct for elected and co-opted members of Councils and Parish Councils.
- 5.2 In order to ensure that the process was working effectively locally, Council agreed that the Monitoring Officer should produce an annual report which would be presented to Council and the Governance Committee. The report would set out the number and nature of complaints received and inform Members of any other activity that was taking place around the Code of Conduct regime.

### Background

- 5.3 During the Municipal Year 2023/24 the Governance Committee was comprised of eleven members (nine District Councillors appointed on a proportional basis and two co-opted non-voting Parish/Town Councillors).
- 5.4 The Advisory Panel initially comprised ten Members: two from the Liberal Democrat party, two from the Conservative Party, two from the Green Party, two parish/town

councillors and two Independent Persons. This was updated following the formation of a Minority Opposition Group.

- 5.5 Details of the membership of the above for 2023/24 was agreed at the Annual Council meeting and details are available at: [\(Public Pack\)To Follow - Minutes, Allocation of Seats and Outside Bodies Agenda Supplement for Council, 25/05/2023 19:00 \(westberks.gov.uk\)](#).
- 5.6 The Members Code of Conduct governs the standards of conduct expected of elected Councillors, and this is supported by a number of documents including:
- Terms of Reference for the Governance Committee and Advisory Panel;
  - Gifts and Hospitality Protocol;
  - Complaints procedures for breaches of the Code of Conduct;
  - Dispensations procedure;
  - Social Media Protocol.

Further details can be found in the Constitution at: [Council Constitution - West Berkshire Council](#).

### Independent Persons

- 5.7 Under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a duty to ensure that it has appointed at least one Independent Person who is consulted before it makes a decision on an allegation it has determined to investigate. It was agreed by Council that the Independent Person may be consulted directly either by the person who has made the complaint or the person the complaint has been made about. Three Independent Persons have therefore been appointed in order to ensure that a conflict situation does not arise.
- 5.8 A person is not considered to be "independent" if:-
- They are or have been, within the last five years, an elected or co-opted Member or officer of the Council or of any Parish Councils within this area. This also applies to committees or sub-committees of the various Councils.
  - They are a relative or close friend of a current elected, or co-opted, Member or officer of the Council or any Parish Council within its area, or any elected or co-opted member of any committee or sub-committee.
  - The definition of relative includes the candidate's spouse, civil partner, grandparent, child etc.
- 5.9 Council appointed Mike Wall MBE, Alan Penrith and Lindsey Appleton as the Council's Independent Persons for the 2023/24 Municipal Year. All three Independent Persons have agreed to remain as Independent Persons for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.
- 5.10 The Council is asked to recognise the significant contribution of the Independent Persons and thank them for their ongoing contributions.

## Governance Committee

- 5.11 The overall purpose of the Governance Committee is to provide effective challenge across the Council and independent assurance on the risk management and governance framework and associated internal control environment to members and the public, independently of the Executive. The Governance Committee is also responsible for receiving the annual Audit Letter and for signing off the Council's final accounts.
- 5.12 The Committee is also charged with promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the Council. They promote, educate and support Councillors (both District and Parish) in following the highest standards of conduct and ensuring that those standards are fully owned locally. The roles and functions of the Governance Committee are set out in the Constitution (Part 2 Articles of the Constitution).
- 5.13 The Governance Committee has a special responsibility regarding the 55 Town and Parish Councils within the District. It is responsible for ensuring that high standards of conduct are met within the parishes and that all Parish and Town Councillors are aware of their responsibilities under their Codes of Conduct.
- 5.14 The District Councillors are therefore supported on the Governance Committee by two co-opted Parish Councillors who are appointed in a non-voting capacity, along with substitute councillors. During 2023/24 the Governance Committee included the following Parish Councillors:
- Bill Graham (co-opted non-voting Parish Councillor)
  - David Southgate (co-opted non-voting Parish Councillor)
  - Anne Budd (substitute co-opted non-voting Parish Councillor)
- 5.15 The Council is asked to recognise the contribution of the Parish Councillors and thank them for their contributions.

## Advisory Panel

- 5.16 The Advisory Panel is responsible for dealing with complaints where evidence of a breach of the Code has been investigated by an independent investigator. The Advisory Panel considers the investigators report. The views of the Advisory Panel are reported to the Governance Committee, which makes the formal decision in respect of any allegations which have been investigated where it is considered that a breach of the relevant code of conduct has occurred.
- 5.17 The District Councillors on the Advisory Panel were representatives of all three political groups within the Council and are not appointed in accordance with the proportionality rules. During 2023/24 the Advisory Panel comprised the following District Councillors:

Liberal Democrats (2 Members)	Lee Dillon, Geoff Mayes
Conservative Group (2 Members)	Jane Langford, Jo Stewart
Minority Opposition Group (2 Members)	Carolyn Culver, David Marsh

5.18 During the 2023/24 Municipal Year the following Parish Councillors were appointed to the Advisory Panel:

- Anne Budd

5.19 The Council is asked to thank the Parish Councillor for agreeing to be a member of the Panel and their contribution for the one occasion it met.

### **The Monitoring Officer**

5.20 The Monitoring Officer is a statutory post and in West Berkshire rests with the Service Director Strategy & Governance. The Monitoring Officer (Sarah Clarke) in 2023/24 was supported by three deputies (Nicola Thomas, Leigh Hogan (part year), and Sharon Armour (part year)). The Monitoring Officer has a key role in promoting and maintaining standards of conduct. The Monitoring Officer also has a statutory responsibility to establish and maintain a register of interests for members and co-opted members of the authority. The Monitoring Officer acts as legal adviser to the Governance Committee and Advisory Panel.

5.21 The Monitoring Officer, under delegated authority, granted a dispensation to all West Berkshire Councillors in 2023/24 to speak and vote on any items pertaining to Council Tax.

### **Local Assessment of Complaints against Councillors**

5.22 Quarter 1 – 2023/24

During this period one complaint was received and processed by the Monitoring Officer. The complaint (NPC10/23) pertained to a Parish Councillor. Following the initial assessment, it was agreed that no further action should be taken on the complaint.

5.23 Quarter 2 – 2023/24

During this period three complaints were received and processed by the Monitoring Officer. All of the complaints (NPC11/23, NPC12/23 and NPC13/23) pertained to Parish Councillors. Following the initial assessment, it was agreed that no further action should be taken on two of the complaints, and one complaint was referred for informal resolution.

5.24 Quarter 3 - 2023/24

During this period no complaints were received.

5.25 Quarter 4 - 2023/24

During this period eight complaints were received and they have all been processed by the Monitoring Officer. Six of these complaints (NDC01/24, NDC02/24, NDC03/24, NDC06/24, NDC07/24 and NDC08/24) pertain to District Councillors. The initial assessment has been held for all of the complaints and it was agreed that no further action should be taken on four of the complaints, with the other two referred for informal resolution. However, one of these complaints is being progressed to an independent investigation.

There were two complaints (NPC04/24 and NPC05/24) submitted about Parish Councillors. Following the initial assessments, it was agreed that no further action should be taken on one of the complaints, with the other complaint referred for informal resolution.

#### Year on Year Comparison of Complaints

Table 1 – The Number of District and Parish Council Complaints received 2018/19 – 2023/24

<b>Table 1</b>	<b>18/19</b>	<b>19/20</b>	<b>20/21</b>	<b>21/22</b>	<b>22/23</b>	<b>23/24</b>
<b>District Councillors</b>	1	9	12	20	16	6
<b>Parish Councillors</b>	20	5	21	12	6	6
<b>Co-Optees</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	22	14	33	32	22	12

Table 2 - Action Taken on Complaints received 2018/19 to 2023/24

	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
<b>Withdrawn/not progressed</b>	4	5	7	0	2	0
<b>No Further Action</b>	14	7	24	28	16	8
<b>Other Action</b>	2	2	2	1	2	3
<b>Investigation</b>	2	0	0	3	2	1
<b>Outcome Awaited</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	22	14	33	32	22	12

5.26 Table 2 shows that, in respect of the complaints processed to date during 2023/24, in two thirds of the cases no further action was taken on the complaint, with the remaining third referred for informal resolution or investigation.

#### Learning Points Arising from Complaints

5.27 The number of complaints has reduced in the past year. However, to date, a higher proportion have resulted in the need for informal resolution and/or investigation than in previous years.

5.28 The complaints received arose from different circumstances, although many complaints alleged a lack of respect from the subject member. Although the complaints have not yet been upheld, this is a helpful reminder of the need to be respectful when communicating with others

#### Register of Interests

5.29 Following the election in May 2023 all elected Members of West Berkshire Council completed and submitted their Register of Interest forms, and updates have been received to a number of these since that time. These forms have been published on the Council's website. A number of interests that have been declared by Members have been withheld from publication where the Monitoring Officer has been satisfied that the

interest is a sensitive interest in accordance with the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011.

- 5.30 District Councillors are reminded to review their interests on a regular basis and to notify the Democratic Services Manager of any amendments.
- 5.31 Parish Councils are reminded via their Clerks to complete and return Declarations of Interest forms to the Monitoring Officer in order that compliance with the Localism Act 2011 is maintained.

### **Gifts and Hospitality**

- 5.32 The Gifts and Hospitality Protocol is incorporated into the Members Code of Conduct and is set out in Appendix H to Part 13 of the Constitution (Codes and Protocols).
- 5.33 Officers are also subject to restrictions on those Gifts and Hospitality that are deemed to be acceptable under the Officers' Code of Conduct, which is set out in Part 13 of the Constitution. Like Members, Officers are required to declare gifts or hospitality received.
- 5.34 The intention of the rules governing Gifts and Hospitality is to ensure that the Council can demonstrate that no undue influence has been applied or could be said to have been applied by any service user, supplier or anyone else dealing with the Council and its stewardship of public funds. The rules therefore set out the obligations imposed on Members and Officers to declare relevant gifts and hospitality which have been offered to or received by them.
- 5.35 It should be noted that in addition to the risk that there could be a perception of impropriety, the acceptance of a gift or hospitality could amount to an offence under the Bribery Act 2010.
- 5.36 The Bribery Act 2010 creates a number of offences where a gift or other benefit is given or offered, which may amount to an offence of bribing another person, and/or of being bribed. Therefore, if Members or Officers are offered a 'gift' or other benefit by a third party, this could amount to an offence not just by the person offering the gift, but also by the Member or Officer concerned and by the Council. It is important to note that offences under this legislation can be committed by a person offering a gift or reward, even if the gift is not accepted.
- 5.37 In view of the above, it is very important that both Officers and Members understand the potentially serious implications of accepting gifts when it is not appropriate to do so.
- 5.38 There were 14 declarations of gifts or hospitality received by Members during the year 2023/24. This represents a decrease on the previous year although it should be noted that declarations are frequently made of gifts or hospitality received that is below the value that requires that to be declared (i.e. £25). Members have been reminded of the need to declare any gifts or hospitality received in accordance with the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol. This information is published on the Council website.
- 5.39 There was also an increase in the number of gifts and hospitality declared by officers with 73 declarations made during 2023/24, which is a considerable increase from 45 declared in the previous year but is more closely aligned with pre-Covid numbers. The



vast majority of gifts received were small token gifts with the total value of gifts declared being less than £1k, and the average value being £13. The highest value hospitality received was a £200 dinner at Newbury racecourse, which was received by the CEO.

5.40 The number of gifts or hospitality received by each directorate, and the number refused can be summarised as follows:

Directorate	Number of Declarations	Number refused
CEO	3	0
People - Adults	62	0
People - Children	2	0
Place	0	0
Resources	6	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>1</b>

5.41 In the last municipal year, the majority of gifts and hospitality declared was in the Place Directorate, but that was due to the fact that Libraries and Culture were deemed to be in Place, but that Team is now located in People (Adults), which accounts for the difference.

## Proposals

5.42 Members are asked to note the content of the report.

5.43 It is proposed that this report also be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils for information.

## 6 Other options considered

6.1 Not to produce a report. There is no duty to publish this report. However, it is important that public trust and confidence is maintained in public authorities, and it is considered that this report provides transparency regarding standards and conduct.

## 7 Conclusion

7.1 There have been a number of training sessions on the Code of Conduct over the 2023/24 municipal year, and these have been well attended, with Members very engaged with the sessions. This is a positive step by Members and should continue.

7.2 There has been a reduction in the number of complaints, and standards of Member conduct remain very good in West Berkshire. This is a credit to all councillors in the district, who should be applauded.

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# Governance Committee annual report – 2023-24

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	18 July 2024
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Iain Cottingham
<b>Report Author:</b>	Joseph Holmes (Executive Director, Resources)
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C4574

## 1 Purpose of the Report

This report is an annual summary of the activities of the Governance Committee for the 2023-24 municipal year. The report is intended for Full Council to provide a summary of key areas that the Committee has considered during the Municipal Year 2023-24 as well as some of the actions and changes that have occurred due to the Committee’s activities.

## 2 Recommendation

For Full Council to note the report

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	None identified
<b>Human Resource:</b>	None identified
<b>Legal:</b>	None identified
<b>Risk Management:</b>	None identified
<b>Property:</b>	None identified
<b>Policy:</b>	None identified

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		No decisions required in the paper
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		None identified
<b>Health Impact:</b>		X		None identified
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		None identified
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		None identified
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>		X		None identified
<b>Core Business:</b>		X		None identified
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		None identified
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Corporate Board; finance governance group.			

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report is an annual summary of the activities of the Governance Committee for 2023-24. The report is for Full Council to provide a summary of key areas that the Committee has considered during the Municipal Year 2023-24 as well as some of the actions and changes that have occurred due to the Committee’s activities. A key area of concern was the work of the Council’s external auditors during the year leading to the likely, at the time of writing, disclaimer opinion from Grant Thornton (the Council’s external auditor) for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years, as well as the consequential impact on delays to the 2023-24 external audit work (to be completed by the Council’s new external auditors KPMG).
- 4.2 As well as the summary included in the supporting information below, the Committee also has oversight of Standards issues and this report needs to be read in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer’s report for 2023-24.
- 4.3 Members also had training on key areas of the remit of the Committee during the Municipal Year.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.1 The summary below highlights the key items that have come to the Committee over the previous year and what action was taken as a result of these. The summary is of the themes and individual reports highlighted alongside commentary on the action taken

### Summary Table of activities for 2023-24

Theme	Summary of reports	Actions
Internal Audit	<p>The committee received the annual report for 2022-23 and has received updates quarterly during 2023-24. The overall conclusion has been ‘reasonable assurance’ can be given for 2022-23 and that during 2023-24 there have been a range of audit opinions with the majority providing satisfactory levels of assurance.</p> <p>The Council commissioned an external assessment of its internal audit function (completed by CIPFA). This concluded that the Council ‘fully conformed’ with the internal audit requirements and the committee congratulated the internal audit team on this work.</p>	<p>Reports were noted and the external assessment results praised.</p>

Theme	Summary of reports	Actions
<p>Financial Statements and External Audit</p>	<p>The committee approved the financial statements for 2020-21 in September following the completion of Grant Thornton’s work for that financial year.</p> <p>The committee has not received a report from grant Thornton (the Council’s external auditors until the audit year 2022-23) on their completed audit. The Committee were informed that Grant Thornton would not complete their 2021-22 work nor start the 2022-23 audit. The Government have consulted on ‘disclaiming’ all incomplete audits up until 31.3.2023. The committee was very concerned by this situation and asked a range of questions about why it had occurred.</p> <p>The committee received a report on preparations for the 2023-24 financial statements preparations. This was on the back of the Council being one of 30% of Councils nationally producing their financial statements on time for 2022-23.</p>	<p>The committee approved the financial statements for 2020-21</p> <p>The committee made a variety of recommendations, including seeking to gain assurance around the future audit contractual arrangements, writing to Grant Thornton (GT) expressing the committee frustrations and seeking assurance on the ‘non fault’ disclaimer opinion, and ensuring that the new external auditors were aware of GT’s work.</p>
<p>Value for Money work – External Audit</p>	<p>The committee received a formal letter from the Grant Thornton about their concerns over financial sustainability. The committee discussed this at length to gain assurance over remedial actions that the Council was taking.</p> <p>The Committee received a report of the External Auditor’s (Grant Thornton) work on Value for Money for 2021-22 and 2022-23. The auditor’s judgement highlighted one significant weakness on financial sustainability in respect of its</p>	<p>The committee noted the report</p>

Theme	Summary of reports	Actions
	low levels of reserves, with no significant weaknesses for governance or improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.	
Treasury Management	The committee received the mid-year report and the strategy report for the year ahead to consider. The committee asked a range of questions around the Council's arrangements.	The committee debated the paper
Risk Management	The committee received bi-annual updates and for the first time in many years, included a part I paper on risk management progress with an updated 'heat-map' of risks. Members asked a range of questions around 'de-escalation' and management risk effectively.	The committee debated the paper
CIPFA Financial Management Code	The committee considered management's self-assessment against the CIPFA financial management code and noted that this will be used by KPMG (the Council's new external auditors) as part of their assessment of the Council.	The committee debated the paper
Constitution updates	The committee considered amendments to the Joint Public Protection Committee.	The committee reviewed and approved the paper to Full Council
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)	The committee considered the AGS for 2022-23 and noted that changes included within it and discussed timescales for some of the key actions.	The committee approved the AGS subject to the final audit of the financial statements (see above point raised with GT)

## 6 Other options considered

There is the option to have no annual report of the work of the Governance and Ethics Committee though this has been rejected on the basis that it is important there is a summary of the Committee's work during the year.

## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Committee have considered a variety of reports as well as approving reports for Full Council to consider. There has been significant input from members of the committee and the independent member to question officers and external auditors on the reports that have been presented, with a number of reports then being provided to Full Council to support the Council's governance framework. A significant amount of the committee's work was considering reports, which were very late, from the Council's external auditors and the implication that these have for the Council on Value for Money and delays, and non delivery, of the audit of the financial statements.
- 7.2 The committee was pleased to note the positive outcome of the independent assessment of the Council's internal audit team.

## 8 Appendices

None

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### Background Papers:

Governance Committee papers

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes:  No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Report is to note only

**Wards affected:** All

### Officer details:

Name: Joseph Holmes

Job Title: Executive Director (Resources)

Tel No: 01635 503540

E-mail: Joseph.holmes1@westberks.gov.uk

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# Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	18 July 2024
<b>Scrutiny Commission Chairman:</b>	Councillor Carolyne Culver
<b>Report Author:</b>	Gordon Oliver
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C4556

## 1 Purpose of the Report

The Annual Scrutiny report for 2023/24 provides a summary of the work of the Scrutiny Commission, and Health Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 2 Recommendation

For Council to note the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2023/24.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implications associated with this report
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implications associated with this report.
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>The report shows how the Council has discharged its legal obligations with regards to scrutiny, including those relating to health scrutiny and scrutiny of crime and disorder functions.</p> <p>Although there is no legal requirement to prepare an annual report, it is considered to be good practice to present the report to Council and publish it on the website in order to raise the profile of scrutiny locally.</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	None
<b>Property:</b>	None

<b>Policy:</b>	The report demonstrates that scrutiny has been undertaken in accordance with national guidance.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Health Impact:</b>	X			The report demonstrates that the Council has undertaken scrutiny of matters that affect the health and wellbeing of local residents and has made recommendations for how services can be improved.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		

<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	X			The report demonstrates that the Council has had regard to the Council Strategy and the priorities of the Executive when developing its work programme.
<b>Core Business:</b>	X			The report demonstrates that the Council has had regard to the Council Strategy and the priorities of the Executive when developing its work programme. This includes areas where under-performance has been identified.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Sarah Clarke, Service Director Strategy and Governance Vicky Phoenix, Principal Policy Officer (Health Scrutiny)			

## 4 Supporting Information

### Background

- 4.1 The Annual Scrutiny report 2023/24 provides a summary of the work of the Scrutiny Commission, and Health Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.2 The report provides:
- an overview of scrutiny's role;
  - details of how scrutiny is carried out in West Berkshire, and jointly with neighbouring local authorities;
  - an insight into how the scrutiny work programme was developed; and
  - a summary of scrutiny activity for each meeting.
- 4.3 Items of particular interest are described in further detail.
- 4.4 The report concludes with a summary of decisions that were called-in prior to implementation and the resolution in each case.

### Proposals

- 4.5 For Council to note the annual Scrutiny Report for 2023/24.

## 5 Other options considered

None – the report is to note only.

## 6 Conclusion

The Annual Report provides a summary of scrutiny activity over the previous municipal year. A copy of the report will also be made available on the Council's website.

## 7 Appendices

Appendix A – Scrutiny Commission Annual Report 2023/24

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### Background Papers:

[Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Local authority health scrutiny - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes:  No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input checked="" 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"/>

**Wards affected:** N/A

### Officer details:

Name: Gordon Oliver  
Job Title: Principal Policy Officer (Democratic Services and Scrutiny)  
Tel No: 01635 519486  
E-mail: [gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk)

# Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24

(July 2024)

## Contents

Foreword.....	3
1. Key Information About Overview and Scrutiny.....	4
1.1 Scrutiny’s Role .....	4
1.2 Operation of Overview and Scrutiny in West Berkshire .....	4
1.3 Community Involvement.....	5
2. Scrutiny Work Programme.....	5
2.1 Complementing the Work of the Executive .....	5
2.2 Pre-Decision Scrutiny .....	6
2.3 Post-Decision Scrutiny .....	6
2.4 Scrutiny of Partners and Third Parties .....	6
2.5 Prioritisation.....	6
3. Summary of Activity for 2023/24 .....	6
3.1 Scrutiny Commission .....	6
3.2 Health Scrutiny Committee .....	7
3.3 BOB JHOSC .....	8
4. Scrutiny Highlights for 2023/24 .....	9
4.1 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Report Decision Review .....	9
4.2 Review of Thames Water and Environment Agency Activities .....	9
4.3 Budget Scrutiny .....	10
4.4 Continuing Healthcare .....	11
4.5 Healthcare in New Developments Task and Finish Group.....	12
4.6 Engagement with the Health Scrutiny Committee .....	12
5. Call-In of Decisions .....	13

## Foreword

*This year 2023/24 has been a busy year for the Scrutiny Commission and Health Scrutiny Committee and their task and finish groups. West Berkshire Council and our residents have faced serious challenges this year, which have influenced our agendas, including the council finances, the cost-of-living crisis, and flooding and sewage discharges into our rivers and onto our streets.*

*Some highlights of the year were as follows.*

- *Scrutiny of the work of Thames Water and the Environment Agency at a special meeting in October 2023, where members of flood forums, Action for the River Kennet and River Action asked questions alongside members.*
- *Scrutiny of the Council's budget for 2024/25, fostering, the Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan, and the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework.*
- *Task and finish groups focusing on 'healthcare on new developments' (reported its findings in June 2024), and 'Covid and recovery' (due to report September 2024).*

*Scrutiny Commission is designated as the council's Crime and Disorder Committee, so the Police were invited to give evidence and answer questions from members. We also dealt with call-ins from Members, including active travel experimental road closures, Newbury town centre pedestrianisation, the development management agreement for Monks Lane Sports Hub and the Property Investment Strategy review.*

*I would like to thank everyone who has played a part in the scrutiny process over the past 12 months including Members of the Scrutiny Commission, Health Scrutiny Committee, and their various task and finish groups. My thanks also to the officers who have made such an important contribution to the scrutiny process including Gordon Oliver and Vicky Pheonix. I would also like to thank external guests who have attended meetings to give evidence and have their organisations' roles in service provision scrutinised.*

**Councillor Carolyne Culver**  
*Chairman, Scrutiny Commission*

# **1. Key Information About Overview and Scrutiny**

## **1.1 Scrutiny's Role**

1.1.1 The role of scrutiny is to improve the lives of local residents through improved public services and ensure that public funds are spent effectively.

1.1.2 Scrutiny committees have the power to look at any issue which affects the area or the area's inhabitants. This gives them a unique legitimacy to examine cross-cutting issues in a way that no other individual or organisation can.

1.1.3 Key roles for scrutiny committees include:

- Holding the Executive and other decision makers to account;
- Policy development and review;
- External scrutiny;
- Performance management.

1.1.4 The principles of good scrutiny are:

- To provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge;
- To amplify the voice and concerns of the public;
- To be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role;
- To drive improvement in public services.

## **1.2 Operation of Overview and Scrutiny in West Berkshire**

1.2.1 West Berkshire Council currently has two scrutiny committees – the Scrutiny Commission and the Health Scrutiny Committee.

1.2.2 The Scrutiny Commission is responsible for reviewing the decisions, policies and services of West Berkshire Council and, in some cases, those of other organisations and partners. In particular, the Commission acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, undertaking scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership.

1.2.3 It comprises of nine Members, reflecting the political composition of the local authority. In 2023/24 the Commission was chaired by Councillor Carlyne Culver and the other Members were Councillors Antony Amirtharaj, Dominic Boeck, Paul Dick, Ross Mackinnon, Geoff Mayes, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, and Christopher Read.

1.2.4 The Scrutiny Commission had five scheduled meetings in 2023/24, with additional meetings arranged as necessary to consider urgent items and requests to call-in decisions made by the Executive that had not yet been implemented.

1.2.5 Topics were either considered at a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission or delegated to a time-limited task and finish group, with findings reported back to the Scrutiny Commission.



- 1.2.6 The Health Scrutiny Committee focuses on matters related to the provision of health and public health services within West Berkshire and fulfils the statutory health scrutiny functions.
- 1.2.7 In 2023/24, it comprised of five Members, reflecting the political composition of the local authority. It was chaired by Councillor Martha Vickers. Other Members who sat on the Committee in the last year were: Councillors Nick Carter, Nigel Foot, Stuart Gourley, Owen Jeffrey, Jane Langford and Justin Pemberton. The Health Scrutiny Committee had four scheduled meetings in 2023/24.
- 1.2.8 West Berkshire Council also has two Members on the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (BOB JHOSC). For 2023/24, these were Councillors Martha Vickers and Nigel Foot. The other Members of the BOB JHOSC are drawn from Buckinghamshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council, with numbers reflecting the population of each local authority, as well as the political composition for each Council. The BOB JHOSC reviews activities relating to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). Members attended two meetings in 2023/24.

### **1.3 Community Involvement**

- 1.3.1 The Scrutiny Commission and Health Scrutiny Committee engage with a wide selection of groups, organisations and individuals when undertaking their reviews.
- 1.3.2 Healthwatch West Berkshire is invited to give an update at all Health Scrutiny Committee meetings to provide feedback from service users. Other key stakeholders are invited to Health Scrutiny Committees in relation to specific agenda items.
- 1.3.3 Scrutiny meetings are open to the public and residents are welcome to come along and listen to the presentations and debates. Task and Finish Group meetings tend to take place in private, but their reports are made public.
- 1.3.4 Members of the public are able to suggest topics for scrutiny reviews by [completing our online form](#). Members of the public are also invited to comment and inform Members' questions on Health Scrutiny Committee key agenda items to ensure that the voice of the local population is heard.

## **2. Scrutiny Work Programme**

### **2.1 Complementing the Work of the Executive**

- 2.1.1 The Scrutiny Commission seeks to complement the work of the Executive. A meeting was held with Members of the Executive and senior officers in September 2023 to review their priorities for the coming year and identify any areas where there were concerns about performance. This helped to highlight areas where scrutiny could add value.

## **2.2 Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

2.1.2 Pre-decision scrutiny (or policy development) can be highly beneficial. It reduces the need for call-in by helping back-bench councillors to develop an understanding of relevant issues. It also allows Members to be assured that public engagement has been properly carried out and alternative courses of action considered. The Scrutiny Commission regularly reviews the Executive's Forward Plan to identify where it could get involved in pre-decision scrutiny.

## **2.3 Post-Decision Scrutiny**

2.1.3 Call-in is an important mechanism that allows back-bench councillors to hold the Executive to account. It allows for decisions made (but not yet implemented) by the Executive, an individual Executive Member, or an officer with delegated authority, to be put on hold so they can be scrutinised.

## **2.4 Scrutiny of Partners and Third Parties**

2.1.4 The Council has statutory duties to undertake scrutiny of services delivered by particular external partners, especially around areas such as crime and disorder, education, and health. These parties are legally required to attend scrutiny meetings, provide the information as requested, and answer questions. In the case of health partners, they must respond to any recommendations made by the Health Scrutiny Committee.

2.1.5 Health partners are also required to consult the Health Scrutiny Committee on any substantial variations to services that affect our residents. A Memorandum of Understanding has been developed with local NHS stakeholders to help inform this process.

2.1.6 The Local Government Act (2000) also gives scrutiny committees the power to investigate and report on any matter which affects a local authority's area or its inhabitants. This type of scrutiny brings its own challenges, as most other organisations are under no obligation to participate in scrutiny reviews.

## **2.5 Prioritisation**

2.1.7 Once potential review topics have been identified, it is important to prioritise them into a realistic work programme. The PAPER tool has been developed to help rank competing proposals. This considers the following aspects:

- Public interest
- Area affected
- Performance Issues / Local Priority
- Effectiveness
- Available Resources

# **3. Summary of Activity for 2023/24**

## **3.1 Scrutiny Commission**

3.1.1 The Scrutiny Commission met eight times in 2023/24. Details of the topics considered are set out below.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics</b>
20/06/2023	Call-In of Individual Executive Member Decision (ID4317) of 16 March 2023 related to Active Travel Experimental Road Closures and Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on Deadman's Lane
	Call-In of Executive Decision (EX4332) of 23 March 2023 regarding revised costs and permission to sign the development management agreement for Newbury Sports Hub
	Capital Financial Performance Report: Q4 2022/23
	Revenue Financial Performance Report: Q4 2022/23
	Quarterly Performance Report: Q4 2022/23
17/07/2023	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report Decision Review
14/09/2023	Community Safety Update
	Revenue Financial Performance Report – Q1 2023/24
	Capital Financial Performance Report – Q1 2023/24
11/10/2023	Thames Water and Environment Agency
28/11/2023	Call-in of the Executive Decision (EX4402) on 2 November 2023 regarding the Property Investment Strategy Review
	Fostering in West Berkshire
	Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework
	2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Q2
18/01/2024	Call-In of Executive Decision (EX4416) of 14 December 2023 concerning the Newbury Town Centre Pedestrianisation Trial
06/02/2024	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2024/25
	Medium Term Financial Strategy
	Capital Strategy, Financial Years 2024/25 to 2033/34
	Revenue Budget 2024/25
	2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Q3
25/04/2024	Environment Strategy Operational Review

3.1.2 The Scrutiny Commission also set up a Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group to review the Council's response to the Covid pandemic and subsequent recovery. This is approaching the end of its review and is aiming to report its findings in September 2024.

### **3.2 Health Scrutiny Committee**

3.2.1 The Health Scrutiny Committee met four times in 2023/24. Details of the topics considered are set out in the table below.

Date	Topics
13/06/2023	Dementia diagnosis rates and pathways in West Berkshire
	Diabetes pathways including prevention, diagnosis and healthcare
	Integrated Care Board activities and commissioning plans
12/09/2023	All Age Continuing Health Care Transformation Programme
	Access to primary care across West Berkshire
	Integrated Care Board activities and commissioning plans
12/12/2023	Mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people in West Berkshire
	Services supporting women and families with perinatal mental health care
	Update on the progress of the All Age Continuing Health Care Transformation Programme
	Integrated Care Board activities and commissioning plans
12/03/2024	Pharmacy Services and current provision
	Approach and systems of support for Early Years in West Berkshire
	To receive the annual report from the Inquest Review Panel
	Integrated Care Board activities and commissioning plans

3.2.2 The Health Scrutiny Committee also undertook a deep dive into the provision of healthcare facilities in new developments through a task and finish group.

3.2.3 The Health Scrutiny Committee maintains a number of watching briefs such as the Royal Berkshire Hospital Redevelopment, Hampshire Hospitals new hospital programme and Continuing Health Care. Members engage with the relevant key partners through informal briefings and other mechanisms, including a visit to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The Committee also responds to notifications of proposed changes to NHS services.

### 3.3 Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3.3.1 The BOB JHOSC met twice in 2023/24 to consider the following topics.

Date	Topics
15/06/2023	ICB Integrated Care Strategy
	ICB Five Year Joint Forward Plan
24/01/2024	Draft ICB Primary Care Strategy
	ICB Communications and Engagement Strategy

## **4. Scrutiny Highlights for 2023/24**

### **4.1 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Report Decision Review**

4.1.1 Following investigations, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) found there to have been maladministration and injustice in relation to how a homelessness application had been managed by West Berkshire Council in December 2020.

4.1.2 The Council was required to consider the Ombudsman's report at a decision making body made up of elected members, and it was agreed that the matter should be referred to the Scrutiny Commission.

4.1.3 Members sought assurances that lessons had been learned from the incident and that suitable mitigations had been put in place to minimise the risk of a similar incident occurring in future.

4.1.4 Questions were asked about the following aspects of the Housing Service:

- Adequacy of processes and documentation
- Officer training
- Quality assurance and serious case reviews
- Levels of resourcing within the service
- Temporary accommodation and use of hotels
- Communications with neighbouring local authorities
- Links with Adult Social Care and Children's Services

4.1.5 Recommendations arising from the review were that the Housing Service should:

- take an assumption of responsibility and ownership of any case/issue until written confirmation had been received from the other party that they had taken ownership; and
- include contributions from clients or charities representing people who had experienced homelessness within its training programmes.

4.1.6 Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Monday, 17th July, 2023, 6.30 pm](#)

### **4.2 Review of Thames Water and Environment Agency Activities**

4.2.1 The Scrutiny Commission undertook a review of the activities of Thames Water and the Environment Agency. This review considered how Thames Water's investment in its water supply and foul water networks was supporting planned development in West Berkshire, and how effectively it was working to reduce and manage local pollution incidents. It also sought to understand how the Environment Agency was holding Thames Water to account.

4.2.2 The following groups provided written evidence in advance or spoke to the meeting:

- Action for River Kennet
- East Garston Flood and Pollution Forum
- Lambourn Valley Flood Forum

- Newbury Flood Forum
- Pang Valley Flood Forum
- River Action
- Thatcham Flood Forum

#### 4.2.3 Key outcomes arising from the review included:

- Discussions with planners to consider how best to facilitate water efficient homes.
- Meetings between Councillor Stuart Gourley and Thames Water to discuss the London Road Pumping Station.
- Meetings between Thames Water and West Berkshire Council regarding pollution in the Northbrook in Newbury.
- Commitment from Thames Water to investigate whether additional sewer lining works were needed at Frilsham.
- Commitment from Thames Water to find a solution for faulty data loggers at Hampstead Norreys.

#### 4.2.4 The Scrutiny Commission continues to keep these matters under review. Thames Water has been invited to attend a further meeting in October 2024 to provide an update on its activities. This will also consider the Section 19 report prepared in the wake of recent flooding events.

Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Wednesday, 11th October, 2023, 6.30 pm.](#)

### 4.3 Budget Scrutiny

#### 4.3.1 A special meeting of the Scrutiny Commission was arranged to allow for scrutiny of the budget before it went to Executive and onwards to Council for approval. Although the Scrutiny Commission had previously received quarterly capital and revenue financial updates, it had not undertaken pre-budget scrutiny before. Given the current pressures on Council budgets and the depleted reserves, it was important for Members to understand the process that had been followed in developing the budget and to challenge the underlying assumptions and allocations to ensure they were robust.

#### 4.3.2 The Scrutiny Committee reviewed the following:

- Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2024/25 (including the Property Investment Strategy)
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Capital Strategy, Financial Years 2024/25 to 2033/34
- Revenue Budget 2024/25

#### 4.3.3 Actions arising from the review, included:

- Identification of where Members could find historic financial information for other local authorities, particularly those that had issued S114 Notices.
- Highlighted inconsistencies in quoted figures for the West Berkshire Tax Base.

- Commitment for officers to provide anonymised information on high-cost social care clients.
  - Scrutiny Commission to programme reviews of key areas of spend, including SEND services/High Needs Block, and the Adult Social Care Strategy.
  - Data requested on how staff vacancy rates at West Berkshire Council compared with those at other local authorities.
  - The Scrutiny Commission to receive an update on the Council's Transformation Programme.
- 4.3.4 Scrutiny of the budget was welcomed by both officers and Members of the Executive and this will become a permanent part of the scrutiny work programme.
- 4.3.5 Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Tuesday, 6th February, 2024, 6.30 pm](#)

#### **4.4 Continuing Healthcare**

- 4.4.1 The Health Scrutiny Committee has kept in view concerns about NHS Continuing Healthcare, with updates provided to two meetings in 2023/24, and ongoing communications with the ICB.
- 4.4.2 NHS Continuing Healthcare (NHS CHC) is a package of care for adults aged 18 or over which is arranged and funded solely by the NHS. In order to receive NHS CHC funding, individuals have to be assessed according to a legally prescribed decision making process to determine whether the individual has a 'primary health need'.
- 4.4.3 Concerns were raised by residents that approvals for patients in Berkshire West (which includes West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham) were consistently amongst the lowest in England, so the Health Scrutiny Committee asked the ICB to explain the process and what was being done to investigate these concerns.
- 4.4.4 The Local Government Association had been commissioned to deliver a series of peer reviews of CHC services. The reviews provided an opportunity for systems to reflect on what was working well and what needed to be developed further locally. The local review also provided an opportunity for clinical and care leaders and practitioners from across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) to reflect on how CHC is delivered at 'place' level and across the new 'integrated care system' (ICS), and how this delivery might be strengthened in the future.
- 4.4.5 The peer team had outlined a number of concerns about how CHC reviews were undertaken in Berkshire West, but found areas of excellent practice in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, which, if made universal across BOB and supported by consistent processes and assurance, could provide a foundation for excellence in delivery of CHC.
- 4.4.6 Additional information sought by the Health Scrutiny Committee included:
- Details of the project plan for how CHC services would be transformed in Berkshire West

- Statistics on the number of patients assessed as being eligible for CHC payments
- Information on how reviews and appeals compared to the rest of BOB and England
- Information about the eligibility process and dates of changes to the National Framework
- A briefing from the ICB to support Members' understanding of All Age Continuing Care.

4.4.7 The CHC Transformation Programme is ongoing, so this matter will continue to be kept under review.

4.4.8 Further details of these meeting can be viewed on the Council's website:

[West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Health Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 12th September, 2023, 1.30 pm](#)

[West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Health Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 12th December, 2023, 1.30 pm](#)

#### **4.5 Healthcare in New Developments Task and Finish Group**

4.5.1 A Task and Finish Group was set up to review healthcare in new developments. This brought together officers from Planning and Public Health, as well as developers and the BOB ICB.

4.5.2 A key concern regarding proposed new developments is ensuring adequate healthcare services are provided. There is a need to ensure that healthcare commissioners are adequately consulted on the requirements for the primary care services to serve new developments when local populations increase, and that developers engage with health commissioners and planners.

4.5.3 There is also opportunity to ensure that new developments are designed to promote health and wellbeing, and therefore prevent future demand on primary care services. There is therefore a need to review how the planning application process is encouraging developers to design with long-term prevention and health promotion for all residents across the life-course of the development.

4.5.4 The scope of the review was broken down into three key areas:

- Part 1: Assessment of health needs in new developments
- Part 2: Health in planning policy and planning consultations
- Part 3: Funding and delivery of primary care and public health care services in new developments.

4.5.5 The task group identified a number of recommendations arising from this work, and its report will be presented at the Health Scrutiny Committee in June 2024, making recommendations for the Council and the ICB.

#### **4.6 Engagement with the Health Scrutiny Committee**

4.6.1 A key focus for the Health Scrutiny Committee in 2023/24 has been to build relationships with key stakeholders to inform and participate in Health Scrutiny Committee meetings and to ensure that the reviews undertaken are effective and collaborative.



- 4.6.2 Partners are brought together to produce reports collaboratively, they share experiences and barriers to help inform each other's ways of working. Many stakeholders leave the Committee meeting with specific actions and note improved understanding which will influence their decision making.
- 4.6.3 Key items are kept under review, which improves transparency of health services for residents of West Berkshire. There is a formal action and recommendations tracker for the Health Scrutiny Committee to ensure that any work is followed through.

## 5. Call-In of Decisions

- 5.1 The call-in process is used to hold the Executive to account. The purpose of a call-in is to scrutinise the decisions taken by the Executive, Individual Executive Members, or Senior Officers making delegated decisions.
- 5.2 The process enables further public debate to be held on the subject. The Scrutiny Commission can then consider whether, in their view, the decision was appropriate or if it wishes to make recommendations back to the Executive on potential changes.
- 5.3 The Scrutiny Commission considered four call-ins during 2023/24 as set out below.

Decision Called In	Scrutiny Resolution
ID4317: Active Travel Experimental Road Closures and Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on Lawrences Lane Thatcham, Station Road Newbury and Deadmans Lane Theale Consultation	That the Individual Executive Member Decision (ID4317) should stand, but that the proposal for a road closure and active travel scheme on Deadman's Lane be referred to Councillor Denise Gaines as the new Executive Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel for consideration as part of a separate scheme.
EX4332: Newbury Sports Hub – revised costs and seeking permission to sign the Development Management Agreement	To refer the matter back to the Executive for further consideration, particularly in respect of the following aspects: legal costs incurred by the Council; costs incurred by the Rugby Club; any penalty fees associated with not proceeding as planned; implications for the new Leisure Contract; and the need to revisit the Playing Pitch Strategy.  <a href="#">West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Executive on Thursday, 6th July, 2023</a>
EX4402: Property Investment Strategy	To recommend to the Executive that: a) they should not seek to dispose of all of the Council's commercial properties; and b) they should not seek to dispose of properties by a particular date.

	<p>(NB: Property Investment Strategy was not revised, but the Board's terms of reference were updated to reflect the Scrutiny Commission's recommendations.)</p> <p><a href="#">West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Tuesday, 6th February, 2024</a></p>
<p>EX4416: Newbury Town Centre Pedestrianisation Extension Trial</p>	<p>That the Executive decision should stand and be implemented with immediate effect.</p>

# Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2023/24

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	18 July 2024
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Patrick Clark
<b>Report Author:</b>	Gordon Oliver
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C4557

## 1 Purpose of the Report

The Annual Report provides a summary of the work of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board in 2023/24. It outlines progress made in working towards the aims and objectives of the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Berkshire West and implementation of the Delivery Plan for West Berkshire. It demonstrates how the Board has continued to assess the health needs of the local population. It also shows how the Board has delivered in terms of integration of Health and Social Care through the Better Care Fund.

## 2 Recommendation

For Council to note the Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report for 2023/24.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implications associated with this report
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implications associated with this report.
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>The report demonstrates how the Health and Wellbeing Board has discharged its duties under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.</p> <p>Although there is no legal requirement to prepare an annual report, it is considered to be good practice to present the report</p>

	to Council and publish it on the website in order to raise the profile of the Health and Wellbeing Board locally.			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	There are no financial implications associated with this report			
<b>Property:</b>	There are no HR implications associated with this report.			
<b>Policy:</b>	The report demonstrates that the Health and Wellbeing Board has been working in accordance with national guidance.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Health Impact:</b>	X			The report summarises the activities that the Health and Wellbeing Board has undertaken to improve the health and wellbeing of the citizens of West Berkshire
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		

<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	X			Health and Wellbeing Board activities relate to Priority 2a: 'Prioritise Support for those who need it most'
<b>Core Business:</b>		X		
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Health and Wellbeing Steering Group Corporate Board			

## 4 Supporting Information

### Background

4.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2023/24 provides a summary of how the Board has worked together to:

- deliver the aims and objectives set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
- implement the actions set out in the Strategy's Delivery Plan;
- identify and respond to the changing health needs of the local population and the services designed to address them; and
- promote better integration of health and social care services.

4.2 The report highlights some of the key achievements of the Board and its partners over the last year, as well as looking ahead to priorities for the coming year for each of the five priorities in the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Items of particular interest are described in more detailed case studies. Detail is also provided on the most recent Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Conference, which was focused on Primary Care and Community Outreach.

4.3 The Cost of Living Crisis has been a key focus for the Board over the last year and there is a summary of how the Board and its partners have worked together to respond to the challenges arising from this.

4.4 In addition to looking back at the previous year, the annual report also touches on some of its priorities for the year ahead.

4.5 A key milestone from the last year was the development and approval of the ICB's Primary Care Strategy, which highlights ambitions for the future of general practice, community pharmacy, optometry (eye care) and dentistry across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Healthcare System. This has major implications for the delivery of health services in West Berkshire, so a summary of the strategy is provided at the end of the Annual Report.

### Proposals

4.6 For Council to note the Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report for 2023/24.

## 5 Other options considered

None – the report is to note only.

## 6 Conclusion

The Annual Report provides a summary of scrutiny activity over the previous municipal year. A copy of the report will also be made available on the Council's website.

## 7 Appendices

Appendix A – Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2023/24.

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### Background Papers:

[Health and wellbeing boards: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-wellbeing-boards)

[Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021\\_2030\\_Dec\\_202111.pdf \(westberks.gov.uk\)](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/10000/Berkshire_West_Health_and_Wellbeing_Strategy_2021_2030_Dec_202111.pdf)

[Better Care Fund policy framework 2023 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/better-care-fund)

### 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"/> |

**Wards affected:** All wards

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**Officer details:**

Name: Gordon Oliver  
Job Title: Principal Policy Officer (Scrutiny and Democratic Services)  
Tel No: 01635 519486  
E-mail: gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk

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DocumentRef:		Date Created:	
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**Change History**

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
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# Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report

(June 2024)





# Foreword



This annual report celebrates the achievements of partners across the health and care system in West Berkshire over the previous year.

2023/24 marked the third year of the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It followed a period of significant change, with the formation of the Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.

The Cost of Living Crisis continued to be a major focus for the Board due to its impact on residents' mental and physical health. The Board kept a watching brief, and it was fantastic to see how the public and voluntary sectors have worked in partnership to provide practical, emotional and financial support for local residents who have been affected.

Changes to community pharmacy was another theme last year. Several pharmacies have closed over the last couple of years, and the Board has had to carefully consider the implications of each closure. However, it was good to see a number of new, independent pharmacies opening. This is particularly welcomed given the expanded role of pharmacies in supporting general practice under the new Pharmacy First initiative.

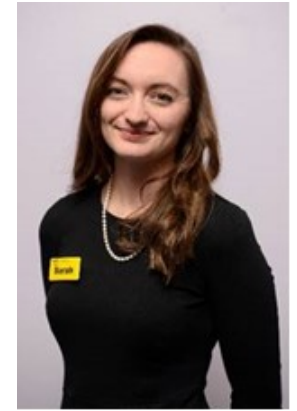
'Primary Care and Community Outreach' was the theme of this year's Health and Wellbeing Conference which provided a platform to launch the ICB's new Primary Care Strategy.

As well as looking back, the annual report also provides an opportunity to consider our priorities for the coming year. It is important that we keep focused on delivery of our strategic priorities, and we will continue to use 'hot focus sessions' to take a detailed look at key issues and make sure our collective work is having a positive impact on our residents. We are also taking the opportunity to review our Delivery Plan, focusing on priorities where progress has not been as expected and on tackling health inequalities.

We understand that almost every aspect of our lives has a significant impact on our health and wellbeing including our living arrangements, communities, access to education and employment, and whether we experience poverty or discrimination. As a Health and Wellbeing Board, we will increasingly focus on these wider factors to ensure we are proactively promoting and enabling good health and wellbeing in everything we do as a partnership of public service organisations.



**Cllr Heather Codling**  
Executive Portfolio:  
Children & Family  
Services (Chairman)



**Sarah Webster**  
ICB Executive Director  
for Berkshire West  
(Vice Chairman)

## Strategic Priorities

1. Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people.
2. Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives.
3. Help families and children in early years.
4. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people.
5. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults.



# How this Document Works



## BERKSHIRE WEST HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY (HWBS)

2021- 2030



### Our Annual Review 2023/24

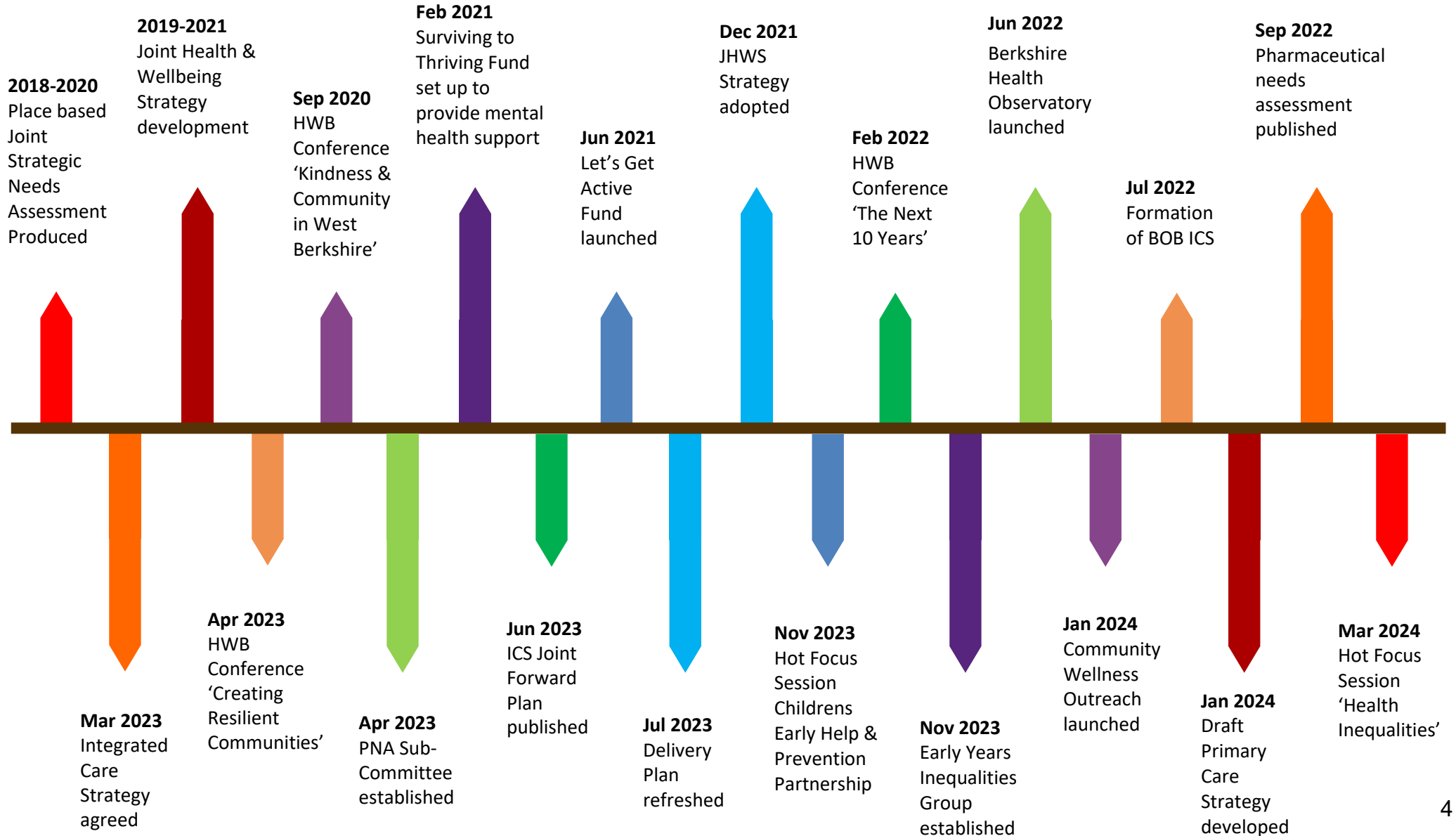
Our annual review highlights the achievements of all Health and wellbeing partners in delivering outcomes, with particular focus on the 2023/24 work programme.

### Looking ahead for 2024/25

The Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) has a strategic role but needs to be assured of delivery of outcomes. The Delivery Plan will focus on the priority areas for 2024/25 as well as the statutory duties of the Board and areas of regular reporting.



# Our journey so far





# Progress on priority one: Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people



## Strategy Objectives

1. Use information and intelligence to understand communities, identify those in greatest need and ensure they are able to access the right services and support.
2. Assess how Covid-19 has differentially impacted local populations, including through displacement/disruption of usual services. Ensure access to these services are available to all during recovery.
3. Take a Health in All Policies approach that embeds health across all policies and services.
4. Address the variation in the experience of the wider social, economic, and environmental determinants of health.
5. Continue to actively engage and work with ethnically diverse communities, the voluntary sector, unpaid carers, and self-help groups, ensuring their voices are heard.
6. Ensure services and support are accessible to those most in need through signposting, targeted health education, promoting digital inclusion, and addressing sensory and communication needs. All in a way that empowers communities to take ownership of their own health.

## Progress on Actions

Progressed a Health in All Policies (HiAP) pilot project within the Council as a showcase piece in further staff education (see case study on page 6 for further details).

Developed a Sustainability Assessment Tool (SAT) to assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of Council workstreams with a RAG-rating for each aspect. The intention is for this to replace the environment land health implications sections on Council reports.

Draft Healthy Planning Protocol produced, which sets out the HiAP approach, internal/ external processes, governance/maintenance, templates, and guidance for developers. It is hoped that the Protocol will be ready for adoption as soon as the Local Plan is approved. (See case study on page 6 for further details.)

The DWP has been working with schools across Berkshire to deliver Employability Skills. Feedback from schools has been good.

## Current Priorities

Groundwork has submitted a bid to Reading Borough Council and an interest to West Berkshire Council to provide green skills education and training programmes. It is hoped to progress this in 2024/25.

Newbury College has worked with WBC and 'Ways into Work' on Supported Internships. Through the NHS 'Route to Recruit' Strategy two placements have been agreed at the Royal Berkshire Hospital from September 2024. Also, seven high needs learners have been identified for placement in local businesses, starting from September 2024.

The Mental Health Action Group is seeking to bring together bodies operating in the area of digital inclusion to share knowledge and learning and consider if there are any ways they could work more productively together.



# Progress on priority one: Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people



## Case Study: Health in All Policies

'Health in all policies' is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity.' – Helsinki statement, WHO, 2014

### Health in All Policies Work in West Berks

Development of a Healthy Planning Protocol which strives to realise the ambition of embedding health and wellbeing considerations in the future development of West Berkshire; by formalising the working relationship between planners, public health, and the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB).

Wild West Berkshire [pilot](#) (Public Health, Environment, Education, BBOWT)

[Active Travel Studies](#) (Public Health, Environment, Transport, Countryside)

[Cooking and Nutrition Programmes](#) (Public Health, Education, Family Hubs)

## Case Study: Community Wellness Outreach Service

West Berkshire Council has commissioned Solutions4Health to deliver a targeted [Community Wellness Outreach Service](#) as part of a wider NHS funded pilot. This aims to reduce health inequalities, engage those most at risk of poor health, and empower them to have a greater say in their health.

Eligible residents are offered a free NHS Health Check, which highlights whether they are at higher risk of conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, or strokes. Patients are advised how to reduce their risk of these conditions. Patients aged 65+ are also told about symptoms of dementia.

Priority groups include: people living in more deprived areas; ethnic groups with higher incidents of health issues; people with drug/alcohol dependence; people with disabilities, domestic abuse survivors, sex workers, offenders and men of working age in manual occupations.

429 NHS Health Checks have been delivered within the first five months of the contract. We are on track to meet the target of 2,500 NHS Health Checks by June 2025.

Healthcare Services

## West Berkshire Community Wellness Outreach Service

Free Health Checks and Support for You!





# Progress on priority two: Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives



## Strategy Objectives

1. Raise awareness and understanding of dementia and ensure support is accessible for them and their unpaid carers. Ensure the Dementia Pathway is robust, including pre-diagnosis support, improving early diagnosis rates, rehabilitation, and ongoing support.
2. Improve identification and support for unpaid carers of all ages. Work with unpaid carers and partner agencies to promote the health and wellbeing of unpaid carers.
3. Reduce the number of rough sleepers and improve the mental and physical health of rough sleepers / homeless, through improved access to local services.
4. Prevent, promote awareness and provide support to those who have experienced domestic abuse in line with proposals outlined in the Domestic Abuse Bill.
5. Support people with learning disabilities, engaging with and listening to them to focus on issues that matter most to them.
6. Increase the visibility of services and signposting to them, as well as improving access for people at higher risk of bad health outcomes, working with/alongside voluntary and community organisations who are supporting these groups.

## Progress on Actions

Dementia Friendly West now has 60 members, and the service has been extended to 2025.

The Young Carers Newsletter was launched in September. The plan is to produce a newsletter every 8-9 weeks.

A weekly youth group provides support for secondary school age carers.

The local needs assessment for accommodation based support has been completed and signed off by the Domestic Abuse Board.

The latest Work & Careers Fair took place on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at Newbury College. 1,200 young people attended and around 60 employers/other organisations exhibited.

250 young people took part in the Delivering Life Skills programme, which completed in July 2023.

The Health and Wellbeing Conference took place on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024. This was themed around 'Primary Care and Community Outreach'. (Further details are provided on [Page 17.](#))

## Current Priorities

We are in the process of finalising the new Carers Strategy.

We are in the process of updating the Carers Strategy Action Plan.

We are in the process of finalising the new Domestic Abuse Strategy Delivery Plan.

We are in the process of finalising the new Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy.

The public health team puts frequent content on social media to support national campaigns, as well as hot and cold weather alerts and messaging. They also share blogs from [UKHSA](#) on relevant topics. Paid adverts will be considered as necessary going forward.

# Progress on priority two: Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives



## Case Study: Dementia Friendly West Berkshire (DFWB)

[Dementia Friendly West Berkshire](#) is a group of individuals and organisations, committed to making West Berkshire a better place to live or work with dementia. There are currently over 60 members of DFWB, which includes 6 people living with dementia and their carers.

Public Health commissions Age UK Berkshire to provide support and coordination for the ongoing development of DFWB.

The main aims are:

- To increase awareness and reduce stigma around dementia in the community.
- To make West Berkshire a good place to live for people living with dementia and their carers, supporting them to feel welcome and safe
- To champion the rights of people at each stage of their journey with dementia; preventing well, diagnosing well, living well, supporting well, dying well
- To encourage a wide range of local organisations and residents to become members
- Signpost to services and organisations – through the DFWB website and calendar

DFWB have launched 4 new memory/ friendship cafés across the district



## Case Study: Destinations Expo Work and Careers Fair

The careers fair is for Year 11-13 students in West Berkshire and North Hampshire. It provides an opportunity for local businesses to source new talent, inspire the future workforce and showcase the benefits of working for an organisation.

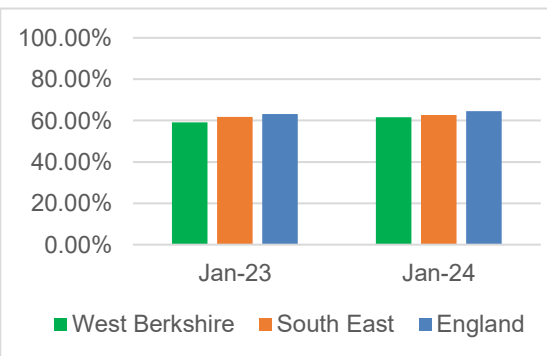
Universities and pathway providers were invited from further afield and had the opportunity to engage with students.

Free coach travel was provided for local schools thanks to Greenham Trust.

Key impacts from the fair include:

- 1,200 students attended, of which 10% had special educational needs
- There were 60 exhibitors, with a wide range of local employers
- 80% of students said their knowledge and understanding of the employers had increased after attending the event
- 82% of students said they found the Destinations Expo valuable
- 100% of teachers said they would you like to take part in this event again

## Dementia Diagnosis Rate for Adults Aged 65 years+



Primary Care Dementia Data, NHS Digital (April 2024)

The Health and Wellbeing Board will continue to raise awareness to increase dementia diagnosis





# Progress on priority three: Help families and children in early years



## Strategy Objectives

1. Work to provide support for parents and carers, during pregnancy and the early years, to improve personal and collective resilience using research and good practice.
2. Ensure families and parents have access to right and timely information and support for early years health. Working with midwifery, Family Hubs, healthy visiting and school nursing to improve the health, wellbeing, developmental and educational outcomes for all children.
3. Increase the number of two-year olds (who experience disadvantage) accessing nursery places. Ensure that our early years settings staff are trained in trauma-informed practice and care, know where to find information or help, and can signpost families properly.
4. Publish clear guidelines on how families can access financial help, including for childcare costs; tackling stigma around this issue where it occurs.

## Progress on Actions

We enhanced the Midwifery, Health Visitor and Children's Services liaison meeting to identify children and families at early help at the earliest opportunity.

We mapped parenting classes in West Berkshire, identifying any gaps in provision.

We developed and promoted Parental Conflict training and resources to agencies involved in providing Early Help across agencies.

We worked with the wider partnership to address gaps in parenting provision by providing training and resources to partners to deliver to parenting groups.

We developed a Family First assessment that assesses and intervenes with families who require more enhanced early help support thereby providing support at an earlier stage and avoiding statutory intervention.

## Current Priorities

Updating the [West Berkshire Directory](#) with parenting information so parents and professionals can access courses.

Creating parenting information on the Council's website that enables parents to identify suitable parenting support for them, linking back to the Directory.

Piloting and then evaluating an Early Help digital referral form that can be used across the partnership.

Supporting the review and update of My Family Plan as a tool that can be used across the Early Help system to drive the early help practice.

Supporting the review of the role of Family Hubs in the Early Help system in light of the Social Care Review recommendations.

Undertaking a self-assessment of the Early Help System to identify strengths and areas for development to be submitted to DLUHC

Supporting early education and childcare providers to deliver extended support to more families via phased roll out of expanded free childcare entitlements.



# Progress on priority three: Help families and children in early years



## Case Study: Care for the Family Facilitator Training Primary Schools

When engaging with schools a gap in knowledge and skills was noted when children start school. Concerns raised by parents in relation to school readiness and boundaries/routines were noted. Therefore, exploration took place regarding a parenting support programme that could be offered by schools in an environment that parents could access without stigma.

Care for the family were identified as a provider to offer training for schools, which has been utilised within family hubs. The parenting coordinator and facilitator arranged funding for two training courses, which could provide 28 trained professionals.

The first of two Care for the Family 'Time Out' facilitator training commenced at the start of November 2023, with very positive feedback from the participants, they are very keen to complete the final part and to start coordinating and facilitating these universal programmes within the school.

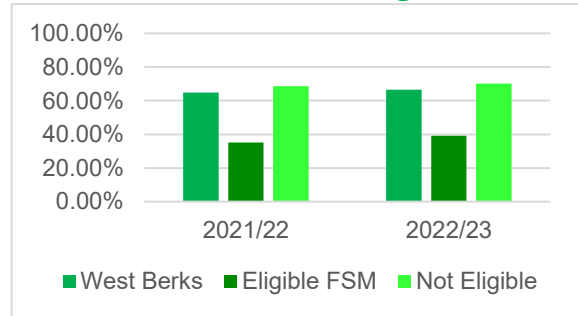
## Case Study: Parenting Provision

Engagement took place with partners across the early help system to explore what parenting work was on offer and being undertaken across West Berkshire. Engagement took place with partners in Public Health and Education to consider the child's first 1001 days, school readiness and transition to secondary school. A report was completed and explored at the Prevention and Early Help Partnership meeting in June 2023.

Several different parenting groups and programmes are on offer within West Berkshire. There are a number of targeted parenting provisions included in the offer which the Parenting Coordinator and Facilitator has been trained in and supported in delivery. Also, individual parenting support is on offer via a range of professionals.

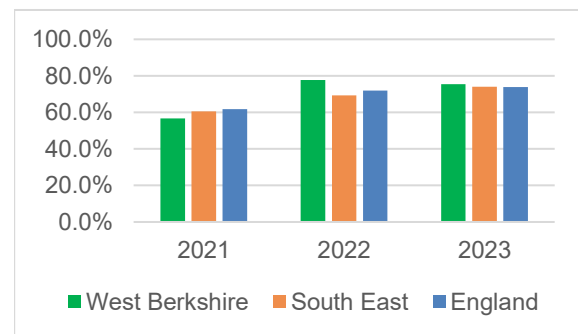
The Parenting Coordinator and Facilitator recognises the wide range of agencies offering support and has arranged a parenting network meeting to provide connections between the group.

## % Pupils Achieving Good Level of Development at Foundation Stage



Early years foundation stage profile, DfE (November 2023)

## % eligible 2-year-olds registered for childcare



Education provision: children under 5 years of age, DfE (July 2023)



# Progress on priorities four and five: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and adults



## Let's Get Active Grants

Application ID	Organisation name	Project title	Total cost of project	Balance	Final Award
20424	Pangbourne and District Bowling Club	Junior Bowls at Pangbourne Bowls Club	£996	£996	£796.00
20377	Five a Day Garden	Kids Go Green 24	£2,532	£2,532	£2,032.00
20413	Sport in Mind	Sport in Mind - Let's Get Active Fund	£5,524	£5,524	£1,000.00
20240	West Berkshire Therapy Centre	Machine Maintenance 2024 - 25	£3,358	£3,358	£1,500.00
20339	Kingsclere Community Association	Summer of Fun 2024	£7,084	£7,084	£1,500.00
20401	The Newbury Community Resource Centre Limited	Let's Get Active - Supported Walking Group	£13,877	£6,826	£4,000.00
20384	Kennet District Scouts	Scout Expedition Light Weight Tents	£1,073	£573	£573.00
20352	The Friends of Hungerford Primary School	Healthy Planet, Healthy Me	£2,919	£1,503	£1,503.00
20331	Berkshire MS Therapy Centre	Specialist Exercise for people with Multiple Sclerosis 2024	£47,034	£27,273	£1,500.00
20277	Compton Parish Council	Replacement Flooring for Compton Sports Pavilion	£4,973	£2,362	£1,000.00
			<b>Total:</b>	<b>£15,404.00</b>	



## Greenham Trust and West Berkshire Council Launch Let's Get Active Fund

Is improving your fitness one of your new year's resolutions? The launch of the Let's Get Active Fund is a great step forward for boosting physical activity access in West Berkshire. This collaboration between Greenham Trust and West Berkshire Council opens doors for exciting possibilities. The Good Exchange web portal is now officially accepting applications, paving the way for charities, community organisations, CIC's and School PTAs to get their projects funded.

“

“Recent times have underscored the crucial role of regular exercise and activity in maintaining physical and mental health. Moving forward, we're dedicated to promoting greater participation in physical activities among young people and vulnerable communities, ensuring options tailored to their individual needs. Through our 'Let's Get Active' initiative, jointly funded with West Berkshire Council, grants are available to local charities and community groups to revitalize community sports and physical activities, encouraging more people to embrace an active lifestyle.”

Chris Boulton, CEO of Greenham Trust

”

The awards have been made in 23/24 and we look forward to reporting progress and outcomes in 24/25.

[Let's Get Active](#)



# Progress on priorities four and five: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and adults



## Strategy Objectives

1. Aim to enable all our young people to thrive by helping them to build their resilience.
2. Aim for early identification of those young people in greatest need.
3. Use evidence to support interventions at the individual, family and community levels.
4. Engage with staff, students, parents, the community and mental health support teams to inform interventions for emotional health and wellbeing,
5. Proactively support the mental health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers.
6. Expand trauma-informed approach.
7. Improve the process for transition to adult mental health services for our young people.

## Progress on Actions

12 local primary schools received a Life Education Performance.

Reading Well promotional campaign with West Berkshire Libraries – 273 books issued.

BOB ICB transformation plan developed to meet COVID-19 demand.

Single access and decision-making. Early help access and referral arrangements realigned.

Autumn conference with Oxfordshire Mind.

Production of a stakeholder map of current partners working on mental health and wellbeing for children and young people.

Mobilising two Mental Health Support Teams in schools.

Three schools engaged in Young Health Champions training.

PSHE resources for KS3 and KS4 students to support schools' PSHE delivery.

Two PSHE podcasts created.

Created a tool which allows policymakers to examine the impact of their proposals and decision.

Mental health needs assessment published.

Welcome packs to target people moving home or new to West Berkshire.

## Current Priorities

Develop and deliver a [health and wellbeing in schools programme](#) including a Health and Wellbeing schools Award and rolling out a universal Year 3 living well workshop.

Develop and expand the Young Health Champions programme.

Continue to fund a dedicated 16-25 transitions worker within the children and young people [drug and alcohol service](#).

Develop and deliver a senior mental health leads network across West Berkshire schools.

Support schools to implement and deliver the refreshed health education curriculum.



# Progress on priorities four and five: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and adults



## Strategy Objectives

- 1 Tackle the social factors that create risks to mental health and wellbeing including social isolation and loneliness.
- 2 Work with local communities, voluntary sectors and diverse groups to re-build mental resilience and tackle stigma.
- 3 Continue to recognise the importance of social connection, green spaces and understanding of different cultural contexts for mental wellbeing. Increase social prescribing.
- 4 Improve access to, quality and efficiency of services available to all who need them.
- 5 Work with professionals in workplaces and other settings; using a preventative approach.
- 6 Improve access to support for mental health crises and develop alternative models.

## Progress on Actions

A report on Financial Problems and Mental Health has been produced and some of the key recommendations have been taken forward:

- A sub-committee including key local organisations and individuals was formed to offer advice and support, an online stakeholder event on 14<sup>th</sup> September with 20 participants representing statutory and voluntary sector.
- A face-to-face event at Shaw House on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, with twelve attendees.
- An online event on 29<sup>th</sup> November with 11 attendees.

To help support residents with a sense of belonging and awareness of local services, a [webpage](#) has been produced.

To raise awareness of organisations that support mental health and wellbeing, information was sent to schools, Newbury Foodbank, Newbury Soup Kitchen, and the West Berkshire Suicide Prevention Action Group.

## Current Priorities

Provide opportunities to join up existing work on Digital Inclusion Champions across West Berkshire.

Raise awareness of resources and interventions that help to address mental health and wellbeing and related issues (e.g. rural isolation and loneliness) to residents, community groups and key stakeholders.

Re-establish a Mental Health Forum bringing together a range of voluntary sector organisations, service users and mental health providers to share information and raise issues.

Review of bereavement support service provision to support residents, particularly for those with deteriorating mental health.

Agree and implement suicide prevention action plan for West Berkshire.

Commission a Suicide Prevention Outreach Service.

Monitor and support the implementation and development of the new Mental Health Integrated Community Service in West Berkshire.



# Joint Strategic Needs Assessment



## Thematic Needs Assessment

Having completed a programme of needs assessments, in 2021 West Berkshire adopted a new themed approach to its Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) through the Berkshire Observatory.

Following a prioritisation process, a workplan was identified and JSNAs have been produced on the following topics:

- West Berkshire People and Place Summary
- Mental Health Needs Assessment (2021)
- Children's 0-5 JSNA (2022)
- Alcohol Needs Assessment (2022)
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (2022)
- Mental Health and Wellbeing of Infants, Children, and Young People JSNA (2023).

These needs assessments are being used to inform the development of health and social care services across West Berkshire.

The full JSNA can be found here:

[Berkshire Observatory – West Berkshire – Needs assessments and further resources \(berkshireobservatory.co.uk\)](https://www.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/needs-assessments-and-further-resources)

## Covid-19 Recovery Dashboard

The Covid-19 Dashboard provides up to date, high level data and indicators around the picture of health in West Berkshire following the Covid-19 pandemic, the report is broken down into stages and maps short, medium and long term effects:

- Pregnancy
- Infancy
- Children (6-11)
- Adolescence (12-17)
- Adulthood (18-64)
- Elderly (65+)

The dashboard can be found here:

[COVID-19 Recovery Report Editing 20210713 | West Berkshire | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(berkshireobservatory.co.uk\)](https://www.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/covid-19-recovery-report-editing-20210713)

## What's Next?

The upcoming JSNA work programme includes development of a Health and Wellbeing Board Dashboard.

The JSNA will inform the next review of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan.



# Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment



## PNA Sub-Committee

In April 2023, the Board established a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) Sub-Committee with delegated powers to review and respond to notifications about pharmacy closures, changes to opening hours or services provided, and applications for new pharmacies that offer unforeseen benefits.

There have been several pharmacy closures in West Berkshire since the PNA was carried out in 2022. This has reflected the trend at the national level. Closures have mostly affected the large, High Street chains. There have also been reductions in hours for pharmacies that previously operated 100 hour contracts.

In each case, an assessment has been made as to whether the changes created a significant gap that required declaration of a supplementary statement to the PNA or a refresh of the PNA.

To date, the Board has only issued one [Supplementary Statement](#) in relation to the closure of Lloyds Pharmacy Ltd (in Sainsbury's), Bath Road, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7SA.

There have also been a number of applications for new pharmacies in West Berkshire, including locations in Thatcham and Newbury.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is a statutory consultee for such applications and the PNA Sub-Committee has submitted formal responses in each case.

Applications for new pharmacies have all been from small-independent providers. This is welcomed since independents tend to form closer working relationships with local GPs and Public Health Teams. The additional service provision, which is seeing an increase in capacity and access, is welcomed by the Board.

Two independent pharmacies have opened in Thatcham and feedback from the Local Pharmaceutical Committee is that they are performing well and issues that affected previous, large chain pharmacies, including temporary closures and long queues due to staff shortages, have largely been addressed.

## Locally Commissioned Services

Across Berkshire West, women aged 13 to 24 can access emergency hormonal contraception for free from participating local pharmacies. A proposal has been made which recommends a review of the age range and commissioning arrangements to increase provision and access.

## Pharmacy First

Pharmacy First launched on 31 January 2024. It enables patients to be referred into community pharmacy for a minor illness or an urgent repeat medicine supply. This new service is expected to free up GP appointments and give people quicker and more convenient access to safe and high quality healthcare. It includes the supply of medicines for seven common.

It is expected that Pharmacy First will help to improve the long-term viability of pharmacies and reverse the recent trend of closures.

Most pharmacies can help you with seven common conditions without needing a GP appointment

Providing NHS services

Speak to your pharmacist if you suspect you have:

- Sinusitis
- Sore throat
- Earache (children)
- Infected insect bite
- Impetigo
- Shingles
- Urinary tract infection (women)

Visit your Pharmacy First!



# Better Care Fund



A key function of the Health and Wellbeing Board is to encourage greater integration and partnership working between health and social care. The Better Care Fund (BCF) supports this using pooled budgets.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is required to report quarterly on the performance against five national metrics:

1. **Avoidable admissions** - indirectly standardised rate of admissions per 100,000 population
2. **Falls** - Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over directly age standardised rate per 100,000.
3. **Discharge to usual place of residence** – percentage of people, resident in West Berkshire, who are discharged from acute hospital to their normal place of residence.
4. **Residential Admissions** – long-term support needs of older people (age 65 and over) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes per 100,000 population.
5. **Reablement** – proportion of older people (65 and over) who are still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/ rehabilitation service.

We are currently on track to meet four of the five BCF Metrics. We are not on track to meet the target for residential admissions. We are continuing to monitor this closely and working

in partnership with the Acute NHS Trusts in enforcing the home first approach and reducing the number of patients being discharged on Pathway 3.

	Priority	Update
1	Recruitment & retention of Social Workers and Occupational Therapists (£298K)	61% used to pay for locum Social Workers and Occupational Therapists in Hospital Discharge Team and remaining 39% used to pay for locum Social Workers across Locality Teams (West, Central and East) to support with admission avoidance.
2	Falls Pathway	<b>Presentation received in December, updated provided in February '24. Need to agree what we will take forward into 24/25 to support admissions due to falls.</b>
3	Self-Care Programme (30K)	Looking at how we can support communication of key messages to support system during the winter.
4.	Trust Intelligence Notification Assistance (TINA)	This should give Social Workers based at RBH an early indication of admissions and likely discharge pathway – will aid discussions about relevant pathway. Social Workers have requested some training on this system.
5.	Reduce the number of people coming out of Hospital on pathway 3.	Meeting held with RBH and other partners. Agreed Wards will ensure Home First Approach is adopted and all discharges will be requested as PW1.
6.	Deep dive into data	<b>CSU attended December Board to talk through admission data – no concerns for West Berkshire. However, we now have discrepancies with 2 metrics. This has been escalated.</b>





# Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Conference



Each year, the Health and Wellbeing Board holds a conference, which provides an opportunity to engage with partners, stakeholders, and residents on key issues and initiatives affecting the health and wellbeing of communities across West Berkshire.

This year's conference was held on 19 April. It was organised as a hybrid event and over 100 people registered to attend.

Opening presentations provided previews of the Director of Public Health's annual report, and the emerging Health and Wellbeing Board Dashboard. The dashboard provides a set of key performance indicators to inform the work of the Board and its partners, as well as demonstrating the impact of local programmes on the health of the population.

There was also a presentation on the outcomes of a 'hot focus session' where Health and Wellbeing Board partners had done a deep dive to investigate issues around health inequalities. This sought to:

- create a shared understanding of health inequalities and how they presented in West Berkshire;

- establish a common vision of the building blocks that could be used to improve health and wellbeing;
- inspire individuals, groups and organisations to take ownership in addressing and reducing health inequalities;
- introduce tools to help structure conversations around health inequalities.

The theme of the conference was 'Primary Care and Community Outreach'. It provided an opportunity to promote the ICB's new Primary Care Strategy for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West, with presentations on general practice, pharmacy, and dentistry, highlighting the challenges and opportunities facing these services, and showcasing plans for how these will be transformed.

There was also a presentation on the Community Wellness Outreach Service, which is a collaborative programme between the ICB, Public Health and the voluntary sector with a focus on increasing uptake of the NHS Health Checks Pathway by eligible residents and local workforce disproportionately impacted by cardiovascular disease, but who are under-served by the programme in West Berkshire.

The conference included a 'stalls marketplace' where delegates could meet a range of service providers operating in West Berkshire.





## Key Achievements

- Joint Health and Wellbeing Board Dashboard to monitor high level outcome data and progress against strategy priorities
- Shared Public Health Team leading on public health intelligence functions and joint management and delivery of contractual arrangements for 0-19 Public Health Nursing, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Smoking Cessation.
- Partnership working with the ICB and Berkshire West Local Authorities to develop plans for piloting, delivery and evaluation of Community Wellness Outreach Services.
- Partnership working to develop aligned plans to increase smoking cessation through effective utilisation of the [Stop Smoking and Support Grant](#).
- Berkshire West Suicide Prevention Strategy - development and local action plans

## Health Protection & Resilience Board

The Board was established in 2024 to:

- Provide assurance to the three Health and Wellbeing Boards (West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham), the Unified Executive (strategic board of the Berkshire West Place Based Partnership) and the Berkshire Resilience Group.
- Protect the health of residents across Berkshire West.
- Ensure that effective consultation and engagement takes place as part of its work programme and assurance role.
- Work to ensure coordination of strategic and operational response across Berkshire West.
- Ensure that there is a focus on reducing health inequalities and that health protection issues of underserved groups are addressed.

## BERKSHIRE WEST HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY (HWBS)

2021- 2030



# Local Response to the Cost of Living Crisis

As well as progressing the actions set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Board has also been responsive to emerging issues.

Since September 2022, the Board has kept a watching brief on the Cost of Living Crisis and its impact on local residents. Price rises have led to significant hardship for some residents, with knock-on implications for their physical and mental health.

The impacts of these price rises have been felt disproportionately by certain groups including the disabled, unemployed people, shift workers, those working in lower paid jobs and residents living in rural areas. A number of actions have taken place at the local level to support residents.

A Cost of Living Appeal was set up, pump-primed by funding from Greenham Trust and West Berkshire Council. This helped the local voluntary sector to support residents with challenges arising from the rising cost of living.

Discussions took place between the voluntary sector, Greenham Trust and West Berkshire Council to establish what support the sector needed and whether there was any appetite for the 'Cost of Living Hub'.

The Council developed a comprehensive website offer, with signposting to local and national sources of help and assistance. This was part of a wider communications strategy.

A Cost of Living coordinating group was set up, consisting of the then Leader of the Council, Public Protection Manager, Hub Manager and the Chief Executive Officers of the Volunteer Centre and Greenham Trust. Also, an internal officer delivery group was set up in West Berkshire Council to oversee the Council's 'cost of living response'.

By the time the Hub had closed, it had supported over 500 individual residents and family cases.

Since the start of the Cost of Living Crisis, the government has released five tranches of the Household Support Fund. Local authorities have been encouraged to use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, and to use funding to meet immediate needs and help those struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials.

All of the 2023/24 grant that was available was allocated, including:

- £346K in direct payments to residents who met the scheme criteria.
- £404K for provision for those on 'free school meals' during school holidays.
- £120K support for those on housing benefit who were not eligible for other cost of living support payments
- Additional £20K match funding allocated to the shared Cost of Living Grant Fund.
- Over £350K of support delivered through the voluntary sector, including: support for pensioners; support for those in temporary and emergency accommodation; essential household goods, and support with food and energy costs.
- 10% of the fund was used to cover administration costs in line with guidance.





# Looking Ahead to 2024/25



## Hot Focus Sessions

The Health and Wellbeing Board organises 'Hot Focus Sessions' in between the formal, public meetings. These provide opportunities for the Board Members and other stakeholders to come together and undertake in-depth investigation of particular issues that are affecting the health and wellbeing of local communities, or the operation of the Board.

Sessions have been proposed for 2024/25 to consider the following topics:

- Housing and Health
- Inequalities Early Years System Workshop
- Health and Wellbeing Board Effectiveness - we will ensure the board drives forward impactful agendas, embed reducing health inequalities across all workstreams, enables efficient, business-focused practices to maximise partner engagement and efficiency

## Community Wellness Outreach

We will continue to roll out the Community Wellness Outreach pilot over the remainder of the 18-month contract.

This will continue to evolve in response to feedback received from the provider and local communities.

Evaluation will be undertaken with the ICB and other Berkshire West Local Authorities to consider the different experiences and outcomes across the three pilot projects and share learning to shape future interventions.

## Delivery Plan Review

A comprehensive Delivery Plan was developed to achieve the objectives of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This set out a wide range of actions with associated targets and key performance indicators.

As we approach the third anniversary of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, this provides a good opportunity to review the delivery plan to identify where actions have been achieved, or where progress has not been as per expectations.

This work will be led by the new Director of Public Health who will be in place from July.

## Making Health Equity a Core Focus

Closing health inequalities and supporting recovery from Covid-19 are at the very heart of

the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and we have sought to ensure that equity is at the heart of local decision making to create healthier lives for all.

A Health Inequalities Task Group was established to oversee this work in West Berkshire. However, the decision was recently taken to disband the Task Group and move to making health equity a core focus for all of the Health and Wellbeing Board Sub-Groups.

## Greater Focus on Supporting Residents with Learning Difficulties

The Health and Wellbeing Board Steering Group has identified the need to better understand and the needs of residents with learning difficulties and ensure these are met.

This is a key group that the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy has identified as being at high risk of bad health outcomes and in need of additional support to live healthy lives.

We will use the Hot Focus Session on Health and Wellbeing Board Effectiveness to consider how our governance model needs to change and what additional work needs to be done in this area.



# Health and Wellbeing Board Partners



## BOB ICB Primary Care Strategy

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) published its draft Primary Care Strategy which highlights ambitions for the future of general practice, community pharmacy, optometry (eye care) and dentistry across BOB.

Stakeholders, patients and the wider public were invited to share their views via an [online survey](#) to help further inform and shape these plans. The survey closed on 29 February 2024. Focus groups, webinars and face-to-face meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders have also taken place over the last four months. Alongside this, engagement has been ongoing with primary care providers and NHS Partner Trusts.

The final strategy was approved in May 2024.

The strategy outlines three priorities:

- Priority 1: to expand at-scale triage and navigation to appropriately direct same-day non-complex need.
- Priority 2: to create Integrated Neighbourhood Teams to coordinate care and support for at least one population cohort.
- Priority 3: to align Primary Care to support a system-wide focus on preventing cardiovascular disease.

To help deliver these priorities, there will be further development of the following services:

- Non-complex same day care
- Integrated Neighbourhood Teams
- Cardiovascular Disease Prevention

**Non-complex same day care** Primary care will better manage patients who require same day support; but whose conditions are not complex. The aim is to improve the patient experience as they get the support they need promptly. This will be achieved by triaging patients more efficiently with an initial contact made with the right health service or professional. This way of working will allow GPs to focus on patients with more complex needs (having more than one health condition).

**Integrated Neighbourhood Teams** GPs will work with multi-disciplinary teams in the community made up of hospital consultants, district and community nurses supported by care navigators, physiotherapists, and the voluntary sector to provide personalised, proactive care to patients with more than one health condition (complex) such as frail elderly people.

**Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention** Primary care will work with health and care partners to reduce the risk of patients developing CVD by tackling smoking, obesity, and high blood pressure. CVD is one of the most common causes of ongoing ill-health and deaths across the ICB leading to heart attack and strokes. This approach will rely on using and sharing data (Population Health Management) between partners to understand better the health needs of our local communities.



# Health and Wellbeing Board Partners





# Glossary



**BCF** – Better Care Fund

**BOB** – Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West

**CVD** – Cardiovascular disease

**HWB** – Health and Wellbeing Board

**HiAP** – Health in All Policies

**ICB** – Integrated Care Board

**ICP** – Integrated Care Partnership

**ICS** – Integrated Care System

**JLHWS** – Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy

**JSNA** – Joint strategic needs assessment

**PNA** – Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment

**UKHSA** – UK Health Security Agency

**WBC** – West Berkshire Council

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## Item 21: Notices of Motion

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 18 July 2024

- (a) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs:**

### Proportional Representation

#### **Overview**

*First Past the Post (FPTP) originated when land-owning aristocrats dominated parliament and voting was restricted to property-owning men.*

*Historically FPTP and the whole structure of elections, created absurd anomalies with the existence of “rotten boroughs” such as Old Sarum, Dunwich and Gatton. Old Sarum was by local reckoning “one man, two cows and a field” and yet returned two MPs to Westminster! Gatton, a village in Surrey, returned one MP yet had just one voter in it.*

*The 1832, 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts changed a lot of the more absurd abuses that surrounded the electoral system so vividly described by Charles Dickens in “Pickwick Papers”.*

*In 2019, 43.6% of the vote produced a government with 56.2% of the seats and 100% of the power.*

*Therefore, Council Notes that*

- *Internationally over **90 countries** use either a form of Proportional Representation or a mixed system to elect their primary chamber.*
- *PR is already used to elect the parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.*
- *PR ensures all votes count, have equal value, and that seats won match votes cast.*
- *PR would end minority rule.*
- *37 councils have already passed a motion to write to HM Government demanding a move to PR*
- *PR is the national policy of the Liberal Democrats.*

#### **The Motion**

*This Council therefore resolves to write to H.M. Government calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws and to enable Proportional Representation to be used for UK general elections.*

## Item 21: Notices of Motion

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on 18 July 2024

- (b) **The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor David Marsh:**

### Companion Bus Passes

*Council notes that:*

*Companion bus passes enable people with disabilities that prevent them travelling alone, such as blindness, to take a companion, free of charge, on their journey. This could literally transform the lives of some of our residents.*

*West Berkshire Council offered a companion bus pass scheme until the “austerity” cuts of 2016. However, neighbouring councils continue to offer companion bus passes, in some cases allowing reciprocal travel between different authorities.*

*Companion bus passes are funded, in full or in part, by central government so reintroducing them would not put a large financial burden on council tax payers.*

*By failing to enable all its residents to enjoy the benefits of bus travel, West Berkshire is in effect discriminating against some of them.*

*Council accordingly resolves to:*

*Reinstate a companion bus pass scheme in West Berkshire at the earliest possible opportunity.*

*Explore the possibility of reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring authorities.*

Council – 18 July 2024

## **Item 22 – Member Questions**

To Follow

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