

# Notice of Meeting

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## Scrutiny Commission

**Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 6.30pm**  
in the Council Chamber Council Offices  
Market Street Newbury

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Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday 16 September 2024

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Gordon Oliver on (01635) 519486  
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## Agenda - Scrutiny Commission to be held on Tuesday 24 September 2024 (continued)

- To:** Councillors Carlyne Culver (Chairman), Dominic Boeck (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Jeremy Cottam, Paul Dick, Ross Mackinnon, Erik Pattenden, and Christopher Read
- Substitutes:** Councillors Laura Coyle, Billy Drummond, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston
- Other Officers & Members invited:** Councillors Jeff Brooks, Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, and Justin Pemberton. Supt. Andy Penrith, Nigel Lynn, Paul Coe, AnnMarie Dodds, Maria Shepherd, Rebecca Wilshire, Neil Goddard, Susan Tanner, and Alex O' Connor

# Agenda

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1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	5 - 6
2.	<b>Minutes</b> To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 17 July 2024.	7 - 16
3.	<b>Actions from previous Minutes</b> To receive an update on actions following the previous Commission meeting.	17 - 22
4.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> 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' <a href="#">Code of Conduct</a> .	23 - 24
5.	<b>Petitions</b> Purpose: To consider any petitions requiring an Officer response.	25 - 26
6.	<b>Crime and Disorder Committee - Community Safety Update</b> Purpose: Meeting in its capacity as West Berkshire Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, to receive a presentation from the Building Communities Together Partnership.	27 - 44
7.	<b>Adult Social Care Complaints Annual Report</b> Purpose: To request the Adult Social Care Complaints Annual Report be reviewed and approval given for publication.	45 - 62

## Agenda - Scrutiny Commission to be held on Tuesday 24 September 2024 (continued)

8. **Children's Social Care Complaints Annual Report 2023/24** 63 - 86  
Purpose: To provide an overview of the management of and performance in responding to complaints in children's social care and request that the Children Social Care Complaints Annual Report be reviewed and approval given for publication.
9. **SEND High Needs Block and Delivering Better Value** 87 - 150  
Purpose: This report provides information on the High Needs Block (HNB) deficit and outlines the work that is being undertaken through the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme and beyond.
10. **Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group Report** 151 - 192  
Purpose: To present the work of the Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group, which sought to identify lessons learned from the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery. The report makes recommendations based on the evidence gathered, which (if implemented) would improve preparedness for a future event.
11. **Appointment of Task and Finish Groups** 193 - 198  
Purpose: To agree the terms of reference and membership for any task and finish groups that the Scrutiny Commission may wish to appoint to undertake in-depth scrutiny reviews.
12. **Health Scrutiny Committee Update** 199 - 200  
Purpose: To receive an update from the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee.
13. **West Berkshire Council Executive Forward Plan September to December** 201 - 218  
Purpose: To advise the Commission of items to be considered by West Berkshire Council's Executive and to decide whether to review any of these items prior to the meeting indicated in the Forward Plan.
14. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme** 219 - 222  
Purpose: To receive new items and agree and prioritise the work programme of the Commission.

*Sarah Clarke*

Sarah Clarke  
Service Director Strategy and Commissioning

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West Berkshire  
C O U N C I L

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# Agenda Item 1.

Scrutiny Commission – 24 September 2024

## **Item 1 – Apologies**

Verbal Item

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## DRAFT

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

### SCRUTINY COMMISSION

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JULY 2024

**Councillors Present:** Carolyne Culver (Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Jeremy Cottam, Ross Mackinnon, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Christopher Read, Richard Somner (Substitute) (In place of Dominic Boeck) and Joanne Stewart (Substitute) (In place of Paul Dick)

**Also Present:** Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Jon Winstanley (Service Director (Environment)), Kofi Adu-Gyamfi (Service Lead - Climate Change), Daniel Warne (Waste Manager) and Catalin Bogos (Performance Research Consultation Manager), Gordon Oliver (Democratic Services) and Thomas Radbourne (Zoom Host)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillors Dominic Boeck and Paul Dick

### PART I

#### 3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 25 April 2024 and 2 May 2024 were approved as a true and correct records and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4. Actions from previous Minutes

Members noted the updates on actions from the previous meetings.

Comments were made in relation to the following items:

- **122** – The Transport Advisory Group had been due to consider the Bus Strategy in July, but the meeting had been cancelled due to the election and so it would be considered at the next meeting in October.
- **131** – Members asked about preparation of the Section 19 report. Jon Winstanley undertook to circulate the timeline to Members.
- **132** – Officers had confirmed that a report on the Council's response to the recent floods was being prepared.
- **146/150** – The previous version of the Forward Plan had shown a report on CIL without a date. This was a duplicate item - the report had gone to Executive in May 2024.

**Action: Timescales for preparation of the Section 19 report to be circulated to Members.**

#### 5. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jeremy Cottam declared an interest in Agenda Item 6, by virtue of the fact that he was a member of Thatcham Refillables. As his interest was a personal or other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

## 6. Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

## 7. Waste Strategy

Councillor Stuart Gourley (Executive Portfolio Holder: Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity) and Daniel Warne (Waste Manager) presented the draft Waste Strategy (Agenda Item 6).

Members asked if paper got wet whether that affecting recycling and whether the crates should have lids to keep contents dry. Officers confirmed that wet paper was not a problem, other than increasing haulage weights, but Veolia had not raised this as a concern.

The issue of overflowing dog waste bins was raised. It was suggested that bins should have QR codes to make it easier for users to report when they needed emptying. It was explained that dog bins were the responsibility of the Countryside Team.

It was suggested that educational material may help to increase food waste recycling. Officers confirmed that educational material had been included when the food waste bins had first been provided, but further information would be sent out in future. The most recent data showed that 59% of households took part in the food waste recycling scheme.

Member praised the repair cafés, which appeared to be working well.

It was suggested that some residents struggled to find compostable food caddy liners. It was confirmed that these were available from supermarkets, as well as online retailers such as Amazon. Also, residents could put loose food waste in the caddies. The Council had previously given away food waste bags via local libraries, and further giveaways were being considered.

It was highlighted that when Veolia collected food waste, bags were thrown in a large wheelie bin, leading to unpleasant smells. Concern was expressed that staff did not have suitable PPE. Officers confirmed that checks were made to ensure that Veolia met all relevant safety standards.

It was noted that just one of the options listed on page 72 of the agenda pack included free garden waste collections and that this was only anticipated to increase recycling rates from 52% to 53%. Members asked if the Administration was still committed to removing the charge. It was confirmed that the manifesto pledge was to phase out the charge, but there was no specific date for this.

It was suggested that some households would struggle to cope if black bin collection frequencies moved from fortnightly to once every three or four weeks, and that this would be unpopular with residents. Members asked how many other local authorities had already made this change. It was confirmed that several Councils had done this, including Bracknell Forest Council. It was stressed that this was just one of the options being considered. It was recognised that this would not work for everyone, and exceptions could be made where households needed more frequent collections.

It was noted that when this had been discussed at Environment Advisory Group, it had been misreported in the media, and it was stressed that this was just one of a number of options being considered.

Members asked if burnt-out vehicles could be removed more quickly than at present. Officers confirmed that they sought to remove vehicles as quickly as possible, but they had to comply with relevant legislation.



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It was noted that the fly-tipping section of the strategy had not yet been completed. Officers confirmed that this would be in the next draft.

It was highlighted that the colours used in the strategy document made it difficult to read. It was confirmed that it would be checked by the Comms Team prior to publication.

Members asked if affluent areas such as West Berkshire produced more waste than other areas and if benchmarking had been undertaken. Officers felt that there was a link, but confirmed that benchmarking would be undertaken to confirm this.

Members thanked those who took part in community litter picking and suggested that its impacts should be monitored and reported. It was noted that the Council's equipment was well-used, but some communities had their own equipment, so there was a need to work with partner organisations to measure impacts. Officers confirmed that they would look at how measurement and reporting could be improved.

Members asked if the 60% recycling target was sufficiently stretching and how this compared to other local authorities. Also, Members asked if achievement of the targets required a move to four-weekly bin collections. It was confirmed that a 60% recycling rate would be challenging to achieve and would put the Council in the top five local authorities nationally.

It was stressed that the top performing local authorities had introduced strong incentives for residents to recycle and throw away less. In other areas, public concerns before a move to less frequent black bin collections largely disappeared following the change. Push and pull factors would be needed in order to achieve recycling targets.

It was noted that Reading Borough Council had introduced smaller bins. Members asked if that had been considered for West Berkshire. Officers confirmed that it had, but reducing the frequency of collections had been shown to be more effective. Also, this was the cheaper and more environmentally friendly option, since the Council did not need to pay for new bins or dispose of existing ones.

Members stressed the importance of education programmes in schools. Experience suggested that younger children often brought family members to community litter-picks, and the primary school curriculum appeared to be effective in engaging children. It was noted that a recent waste vehicle livery competition had attracted over 500 entries and had proved an effective way to engage local schools. Also, the Waste Team had a dedicated officer who undertook educational visits to schools.

It was suggested that having local litter picking kits may make it easier for residents to take part. Officers undertook to consider whether this could be incorporated into the strategy.

Members highlighted that less frequent grass-cutting meant that litter was often hidden, and it was suggested that litter-picks be linked to cutting schedules.

The Great British Spring Clean was welcomed, but it was suggested that additional events be organised at other times throughout the year.

It was noted that the mini-recycling centres were well used, and it was suggested that if more could be provided, they would help with recycling of large cardboard boxes. It was confirmed that the cardboard recycling facility at Tilehurst would not be replaced following a recent fire. However, if large cardboard boxes were folded to a size no larger than a wheelie bin, then they would be collected from the kerbside. It was also confirmed that CCTV would be installed at recycling centres to try to address anti-social behaviour.

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Members asked if it would be possible to have soft plastic collection in town centres. Officers confirmed that local authorities would be required to collect this from the kerbside by 2027.

There was some discussion about why garden and food waste were collected separately when they were subsequently mixed at the depot. It was explained that food waste was collected weekly, but garden waste was collected fortnightly, and the contract was specified and resourced on that basis. Research had shown that separate collections resulted in increased volumes being recycled. Also, separate food waste collections allowed households to see how much they were throwing away and so they were more likely to modify their behaviour. If food waste was processed via anaerobic digestion, it would generate energy from the resulting bio-methane. This was something that the Council was considering for the future.

Proposals to use lids or nets for kerbside recycling boxes were noted. Members felt that lids were preferable, since nets posed a risk to wildlife.

Concerns were highlighted about the Continental contract. It was suggested that if parish councils pulled out of the contract, this may have implications in terms of economies of scale. Officers confirmed that the contract was procured through the Countryside Team. Bin collection was a relatively small part of their operations, so the impacts of parish councils pulling out would be minimal.

### **Actions:**

- **Suggest use of QR codes on dog bins to the Countryside Team.**
- **Waste Team to develop additional educational materials to promote food waste recycling.**
- **Ask Comms Team to check the accessibility of the Waste Strategy, including colour contrast.**
- **Undertake benchmarking with other local authorities to check link between affluence and waste volume.**
- **Consider how measurement and reporting of community litter-picking could be improved, and consider increased provision of community litter-picking kits.**
- **Consider synchronising litter-picks with grass-cutting schedules.**

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **8. 2023/24 Performance Report Year End**

Catalin Bogos (Performance Research and Consultation Manager) presented the 2023/24 Performance Report Year End (Agenda Item 7).

There was some discussion about the pros and cons of the new report format.

It was noted that the report did not contain detailed performance information, but instead required several clicks to navigate to the online portal. It was suggested that this was neither intuitive nor transparent. It was not possible to print out the information or read it off-line. It was suggested that the administration was 'hiding behind clicks'.

An opposing view was put forward suggesting that the old report was too long and inaccessible and the new system was an improvement, being transparent and nicely presented in a graphical format. It was suggested that it would be unlikely that anyone would want to print it off.

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Officers suggested that the performance portal was easier to find than a report within a set of committee papers. The portal could be accessed via a computer, tablet or phone and included more detail than could be provided within a report.

It was recognised that some people preferred digital communications, while others preferred printed reports. It was suggested that a longer report be made available in future that could be downloaded if required.

It was suggested that the 'performance in pictures' on page 109 of the agenda did not provide an adequate summary of the Council's performance and was just 'spin'. It was suggested that this should be further developed for future reports.

It was noted that areas of poor performance were clearly shown. The report provided a high level summary and allowed for more in depth interrogation via the performance portal. It was suggested that the next report should show how areas of poor performance were being addressed, since these were of particular interest to the Scrutiny Commission.

Members queried the overall status of particular categories, since one segment was shown as green despite three out of five elements being red. It was suggested that the outer circle be amended to provide some indication as to the weighting of the components.

It was suggested that previous years' data should be included in Appendix D.

It was noted that the Department for Transport had requested that consultation be carried out on the proposed pedestrianisation of Northbrook Street prior to implementation of the experimental traffic regulation order. Opposition Members had previously advocated this approach.

Members asked about the impacts of the Housing First scheme in terms of tackling rough sleeping. Also, concern was expressed about the number of empty Sovereign Network Group properties and the number that were being sold because they needed extensive renovation. Officers explained that there were initiatives for the Council to use its own assets to provide additional accommodation. Also, action had been delayed due to resourcing issues.

Members asked about the delay to the Local Transport Plan. It was confirmed that formal guidance was awaited from central government. The target date had been pushed back to March 2025.

Members expressed disappointment that the Executive Portfolio Holder was not present to answer questions.

Members noted that Catalin Bogos was leaving the Council and thanked him for his contributions.

### **Actions:**

- **Future reporting to include a detailed downloadable/printable report alongside the performance portal.**
- **Develop the 'performance in pictures' infographic to provide a more comprehensive summary of the Council's performance.**
- **Provide historic data within the influencer measure dashboard.**
- **Amend the outer ring of the sunburst diagram to more accurately reflect performance.**
- **Chairman of Scrutiny Commission to discuss issues relating to Housing First and empty homes with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder.**

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

**9. Revenue Report Outturn 2023/24**

Councillor Iain Cottingham (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Resources) and Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources) presented the Revenue Report Outturn 2023/24 (Agenda Item 8).

It was noted that the report related to the previous administration's budget and it was acknowledged that the Council was currently in a difficult position.

Members congratulated the Executive on reducing agency staff spending. It was confirmed that savings factored in all oncosts associated with in-house staff.

Members asked about anticipated returns on transformation activity. It was confirmed that this information was provided in the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts report that went to Council in February each year. One example was the use of enhanced recruitment/retention payments in Children and Family Services. This had reduced agency staff from 34% to 12-14%. Other examples included the repurposing of assets such as Walnut Close and digitalisation. Reassurance was provided that a thorough process was in place to calculate return on investment of transformation activity.

A question was asked about the future of the Council's own care homes. It was confirmed that various scenarios were being investigated, including for alternative providers to provide care.

Members asked about the decision at Schools Forum to clawback funding from maintained schools to help fund overspends in SEND/high needs block. It had been confirmed that this decision could not be called in, but Members were concerned that funds raised independently by schools may be at risk. Members also asked whether other services could be subject to in-year clawback of funds.

It was confirmed that clawback was related to dedicated schools grant payments, and that funds raised by PTAs should be ring-fenced in a separate account and therefore would not be subject to clawback. Other clawbacks would depend on the terms of the government grants, which would be for the new government to determine. Some of these were due to end shortly (e.g., Household Support Fund). It was confirmed that Adult Social Care was mostly funded through the general fund rather than specific grants.

Members asked if schools would have to make further in-year savings. It was confirmed that funds clawed back had been accumulated over a number of previous financial years. Schools had been requested to provide evidence of their funding priorities and where allocations had been made as part of their budget-setting process.

Members asked if the headteachers of schools affected by the clawback had been allowed to vote in the decision at Schools Forum. It was confirmed that only Members of maintained schools had been allowed to vote on the matter, but schools affected by the clawback had not been permitted to take part in the vote. It was suggested that this was unfair, since schools that were not affected by the clawback had an incentive to support it. It was suggested that the way the Schools Forum was constituted and its decision making processes should be reviewed.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

**10. Capital Financing Performance Report Outturn 2023/24**

Councillor Iain Cottingham (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Resources) and Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources) presented the Revenue Report Outturn 2023/24 (Agenda Item 9).

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Members welcomed the categorisation of capital expenditure and reprofiling based on the Council Strategy priorities. Further detail was requested about the impacts of reprofiling of £12M under business as usual activity, and whether any critical projects would be affected. It was explained that schemes funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership had been delayed, but any changes were reflected in the Performance Report.

The Commission noted that capital expenditure often had to be reprofiled. While it was frustrating to see projects delayed, this was mostly due to resource constraints and external factors. Members felt that any issues had been well-explained.

Concern was expressed about the Theale Railway Station project. It was suggested that the new government should be lobbied to ensure that it stayed on track.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 11. Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24

The Chairman presented the Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24 (Agenda Item 10).

It was noted that the report was due to be presented at Council on 18 July and Members were encouraged to speak to the item at that meeting should they wish to do so.

Members thanked the Chairman for her work over the last year and thanked the officers who had responded to requests for information.

The Commission welcomed having information on Scrutiny and Health Scrutiny in one place, with links to particular meetings.

It was suggested that Members may wish to consider alternative formats for future annual reports and it was noted that some other local authorities included multi-media content in their reports.

It was noted that the Peer Challenge had recommended more visible leadership of scrutiny, so the Chairman indicated that she would be meeting with the Comms Team to discuss how to promote the work of the Scrutiny Commission.

The Peer Challenge had also recommended that the Scrutiny Commission maintain a log of recommendations to the Executive to allow for tracking of responses and implementation of actions.

Members noted that a paper was due to go to the Constitution Review Task Group about the structure of scrutiny. This would look at scrutiny models adopted in other local authorities.

Councillor Richard Somner proposed to accept the recommendation set out in the report. The motion was seconded by Councillor Erik Pattenden. At the vote, the motion was carried.

**Action: Set up log of recommendations to Executive.**

**RESOLVED** to agree the Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24 for presentation to Council.

### 12. Appointment of Task and Finish Groups

The Chairman introduced the item on Appointment of Task and Finish Groups (Agenda Item 11).

The Chairman requested nominations for membership of the Sports Hub Task and Finish Group by the end of July. At least three Members were needed, but five would be preferable. The Chairman indicated that she would be happy to Chair the Task and

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Finish Group. Councillors Jeremy Cottam and Chris Read indicated that they would like to be part of the Task and Finish Group.

It was suggested that an additional Liberal Democrat Member and a Conservative Member should be nominated to fill the remaining places.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 13. Task and Finish Group Updates

The Commission considered the Task and Finish Group Updates (Agenda Item 12).

The Chairman read out the update provided by Councillor Paul Dick. This can be viewed on the meeting recording here:

[Scrutiny Commission, Wednesday 17 July 2024 \(youtube.com\)](#)

The Chairman felt that it had been an interesting and worthwhile review.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 14. Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The Commission considered the Health Scrutiny Committee Update (Agenda Item 13).

The Chairman read out the update provided by Councillor Martha Vickers. This can be viewed on the meeting recording here:

[Scrutiny Commission, Wednesday 17 July 2024 - YouTube](#)

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

### 15. West Berkshire Council Forward Plan May to August

The Commission considered the Executive Forward Plan for the period covering May to August 2024 (Agenda Item 14).

Members had no comments on the Forward Plan.

**Resolved that** the Forward Plan be noted.

### 16. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered the draft Work Programme (Agenda Item 15)

It was suggested that Project Management be considered by a Task and Finish Group that rather than as a single item at the next meeting. Members observed that a large number of public sector projects failed relative to those in the private sector, and so it would be worth devoting more time to this topic.

It was noted that the original intention had been to look at project management of IT contracts, but the brief had been extended to include Faraday Road and consider project management processes in general. It was suggested that Faraday Road should be considered separately from the IT projects.

It was confirmed that officers had not yet started work on writing the report for September.

It was suggested that draft Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group could be brought to the next meeting for approval.

Members indicated that project management should be carried out to PRINCE 2 standards, but that did not always happen and different approaches were often used. It

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was suggested that the Task and Finish Group needed to look at whether officers received PRINCE2 training.

In relation to IT projects, it was felt that external influences were a key issue.

Members expressed concerns that the review could lack focus if too much was rolled into the Terms of Reference.

Councillor Erik Pattenden proposed that a Task and Finish Group be established to review the Council’s Project Management Methodology to cover Care Director, iTrent and the Faraday Road Football Ground. This was seconded by Councillor Chris Read. At the vote the motion was carried.

**RESOLVED** that a Task and Finish Group be established to review the Council’s Project Management Methodology to cover Care Director, iTrent and the Faraday Road Football Ground.

The Chairman indicated that she would discuss this with officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder: Transformation and Corporate Programme.

It was suggested that the new Executive Portfolio Holder be briefed for the Community Safety Update item planned for the September meeting.

It was noted that the planned Social Care briefing related to high cost clients.

It was noted that the Governance Committee was also looking at SEND.

A provisional date of 17 October 2024 had been set for the Thames Water and Section 19 flooding report.

It was proposed to hold another work planning session with Executive Members and Corporate Board in September.

**ACTIONS:**

- **Brief the new Executive Portfolio Holder about the Community Safety Update.**
- **Set up a work planning session with Executive Members and Corporate Board.**

**RESOLVED** that the amended work programme be noted.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.03 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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

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**Actions arising from previous Meetings**

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

Ref	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Status	Comments/Update
89	07/03/2023	<b>Libraries Review</b> Consult with town / parish councils to understand what they wanted from the service	Felicity Harrison	In progress	The libraries report did not go to Executive on 21 September 2023 as originally planned. Instead, the vision for libraries, based on the recommendations of the Libraries Review, was presented to Strategy Board on 9 November 2023. The review was then deferred until the new Libraries Manager was in post. This is now expected to be ready by end of September 2024.
90	07/03/2023	<b>Libraries Review</b> Ensure that 'priorities', 'review recommendations' and 'opportunities for future investment are aligned and that targets are set	Felicity Harrison		
91	07/03/2023	<b>Libraries Review</b> Libraries report to be updated before submitting it to the Executive	Felicity Harrison		
112	11/10/2023	<b>Thames Water and Environment Agency</b> Set up a meeting with Councillor Stuart Gourley and council officers to discuss the London Road pumping station	Thames Water	In progress	Held initial meeting prior to Christmas, TW committed to come back before end of March to present firmer plans for London Road Pumping Station and Lower Way Sewage Treatment Works. They have now done this, albeit no firm plan was provided, but they have talked through the initial plan, and the various governance and business case processes it needs to go through to secure and ringfence funding for the upgrades required, subject to approval. Officers have been discussing in detail with TW on the best approach for this upgrade and associated logistics to ensure all stakeholders are aligned. Further updates are due soon.
116	11/10/2023	<b>Thames Water and Environment Agency</b> Meet with the EA and West Berkshire Council to discuss the Northbrook in Newbury	Thames Water	In progress	Thames Water have supported with testing of the Northbrook. WBC have started an initial business case, and had initial conversations with the Environment Agency on potential funding opportunities for flood alleviation. The business case being finalised, but will be managed in line with the emerging draft Section 19 report after the January 2024 district-wide flooding. This will require EA funding.
122	28/11/2023	<b>Scrutiny Commission Work Programme</b> Check if the Bus Survey results are available and when the Transport Advisory Group would be looking at the Bus Strategy.	Gordon Oliver	Complete	The bus survey closed on 10 September 2023. Analysis of the results can be found in the 2023 Bus Service Improvement Plan: <a href="https://westberks.gov.uk/media/57563/Bus-Service-Improvement-Plan-2023/pdf/West_Berkshire_Council_Final_BSIP_2023_v.3.1.pdf?m=1718096310930">https://westberks.gov.uk/media/57563/Bus-Service-Improvement-Plan-2023/pdf/West_Berkshire_Council_Final_BSIP_2023_v.3.1.pdf?m=1718096310930</a> TAG was due to look at the Bus Strategy in July 2024, but the meeting has been postponed to 24 October due to the election. The 2024 Survey is currently live on the Council's website: <a href="https://parish.westberks.gov.uk/wb-bus-survey-2024">https://parish.westberks.gov.uk/wb-bus-survey-2024</a>
123	06/02/2024	<b>Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2024/25</b> Correct the typo in Appendix C of the report (% to £)	Joseph Holmes	Complete	This has been amended for 2024/25.
127	06/02/2024	<b>Revenue Budget 2024/25</b> Provide a briefing on high cost social care cases	Paul Coe	Complete	Arranged for 23 September 2024.

**Actions arising from previous Meetings**

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

Ref	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Status	Comments/Update
128	06/02/2024	<b>Revenue Budget 2024/25</b> Programme reviews of SEND services and the Adult Social Care Strategy.	Gordon Oliver	Complete	SEND High Needs Block Reviews have been programmed for September 2024 and March 2025
129	06/02/2024	<b>2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Q3</b> Liaise with Catalin Bogos regarding comparator data for staff vacancy rates	Joseph Holmes	Complete	From an initial search, it appears that the Council is similar to the average in terms of staff vacancy rates, however, comprehensive comparator data is difficult to get hold of.
130	06/02/2024	<b>2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Q3</b> Programme a report on the Transformation Programme in discussion with the Chairman and Gabrielle Mancini	Gordon Oliver	In progress	Scope of the report needs to be further defined before it can be programmed.
131	25/04/2024	<b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b> Scrutiny Commission to review the Section 19 report at the October meeting.	Jon Winstanley	In progress	Awaiting draft report from WSP. Timescales for preparation of the report will be circulated.
132	25/04/2024	<b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b> Officers to prepare a report similar to that produced following scrutiny of the 2014 flooding response in order to provide reassurance that the Council was joined-up when it came to: a) its flood and water management related strategies; b) the various council teams that responded to such emergencies; and c) communication between authorities.	Carolyn Richardson	In progress	Will be reported to the October meeting
134	25/04/2024	<b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b> For officers to provide an update about take-up of flood grants at the October meeting of the Scrutiny Commission	Jon Winstanley	In progress	Will be reported to the October meeting
135	25/04/2024	<b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b> Pumping of groundwater and cellar water and the need for a long-term solution to be discussed at the October meeting of Scrutiny Commission.	Thames Water	In progress	To be discussed at the Special meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 17 October 2024
136	25/04/2024	<b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b> For Scrutiny Commission to consider how lessons learned were being captured and how these could be used to inform Environment Agency decisions about future flood alleviation schemes.	Environment Agency	In progress	To be discussed at the Special meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 17 October 2024

**Actions arising from previous Meetings**

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

Ref	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Status	Comments/Update
138	25/04/2024	<p align="center"><b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>Seek clarity at the October meeting of Scrutiny Commission that the WBC Section 19 report and any other relevant documentation and evidence gathered this winter/spring will be used to inform revisions to the GISMP documents.</p>	Cllr Carlyne Culver	In progress	To be discussed at the Special meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 17 October 2024
139	25/04/2024	<p align="center"><b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>At October Scrutiny, ask Thames Water how they log calls, ask why people were told they were the only ones affected, check that the automatic reply email system has been rectified, and ask why people have been told there was no evidence when there clearly was.</p>	Cllr Carlyne Culver	In progress	To be discussed at the Special meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 17 October 2024
141	25/04/2024	<p align="center"><b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>Scrutiny Commission to be updated about progress with Councillor Gourley's motion that was passed at March Council.</p>	Cllr Stuart Gourley	In progress	<p>Letters to DEFRA ministers all sent - no response received. Letter to TW CEO sent - response received and meeting arranged to discuss the longer term, and the strategic plans TW have to improve the situation. We are keeping the pressure on for proper long-term solutions from Thames Water and partnering where required on key infrastructure project development.</p> <p>TW and WBC are still in contact with current ongoing issues where they remain and ensuring TW are managing the real-time impact of this. A further meeting is planned for September to get updates on works completed across West Berks to mitigate issues and to discuss plans for this winter, and any concerns.</p>
143	25/04/2024	<p align="center"><b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b></p> <p>Seek an update from Councillor Gourley about whether action would be taken following the results of the Northbrook tests.</p>	Cllr Stuart Gourley	In progress	<p>Following a walkover of the Northbrook with the EA and Flood Forum members it was discussed about whether further testing was needed to determine pollutants. EA recommendation was not, as they believe in their experience that it's consistent with watercourses where surface water is drained to.</p> <p>There is small-scale work planned on some areas of the Northbrook catchment to promote more sustainable drainage solutions. Further options are being investigated.</p> <p>Rain gardens on Faraday Road are almost complete, this will support greening of this area, and promote more sustainable drainage solutions. SG has continued to engage with EA on further testing of the Northbrook so we can bottom this action out.</p>

**Actions arising from previous Meetings**

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

Ref	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Status	Comments/Update
145	25/04/2024	<b>Environment Strategy Operational Review</b> Arrange a Town and Parish Climate Forum focused on biodiversity.	Jenny Graham	In progress	A presentation and discussion on biodiversity has been added to the Forward Plan for the Town and Parish Council Climate Forum on 6th November 2024. This will also be touched on at the District Parish Conference in October, which will be used to signpost to the November meeting. Prior to this updates will be provided on a regular basis to the group as usual in relation to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and how they can engage.
146	25/04/2024	<b>Forward Plan 1 May to 31 August 2024</b> Confirm why the CIL report was not due until May 2025.	Clare Lawrence	Complete	The report went to the May 2024 meeting of the Executive.
147	25/04/2024	<b>Forward Plan 1 May to 31 August 2024</b> Confirm Planning Advisory Group's role in reviewing the CIL report.	Clare Lawrence	Complete	There was discussion of the Judicial Review at the PAG meeting on 19 October 2023.
150	25/04/2024	<b>Forward Plan 1 May to 31 August 2024</b> Address concerns about missing/outdated information on the Forward Plan	Sadie Owen	Complete	The forward plan has been updated
152	25/04/2024	<b>Scrutiny Commission Work Programme</b> Invite Thames Water and Environment Agency to the October meeting	Gordon Oliver	Complete	Both organisations have confirmed they will attend.
153	17/07/2024	<b>Waste Strategy</b> Suggest use of QR codes on dog bins to the Countryside Team	Gordon Oliver	Complete	Stickers will be applied with QR codes once the bin condition survey is complete and any replacements have been installed.
154	17/07/2024	<b>Waste Strategy</b> Waste Team to develop additional educational materials to promote food waste recycling.	Daniel Warne	Complete	Communications have been issued, (Rubbish Rumour videos, new collection vehicle livery). We will continue to develop material and promote the service.
155	17/07/2024	<b>Waste Strategy</b> Ask Comms Team to check the accessibility of the Waste Strategy, including colour contrast	Daniel Warne	Complete	Draft strategy has been reviewed and transferred to the corporate style by the Comms Team.
156	17/07/2024	<b>Waste Strategy</b> Undertake benchmarking with other local authorities to check the link between affluence and waste volume.	Daniel Warne	In progress	Assigned to officer for action when 2023/24 data is issued by DEFRA.
157	17/07/2024	<b>Waste Strategy</b> Consider how measurement and reporting of community litter-picking could be improved, and consider increased provision of community litter-picking kits as part of the Waste Strategy	Daniel Warne	In progress	Consideration is being given to how this can be achieved, ready to implement as part of the Waste Management Strategy.
158	17/07/2024	<b>Waste Strategy</b> Consider synchronising litter-picks with grass-cutting schedules.	Daniel Warne	Complete	Discussion between relevant internal teams has taken place. Teams to continue dialogue and agree a plan to trial synchronisation.

**Actions arising from previous Meetings**

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

Ref	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Status	Comments/Update
159	17/07/2024	<b>2023/24 Performance Report Year End</b> Future reporting to include a detailed downloadable/printable report alongside the performance portal.	Jenny Legge	Complete	This is already provided as an appendix for Corporate Board/Operations Board. It can be provided for Scrutiny Commission in future.
160	17/07/2024	<b>2023/24 Performance Report Year End</b> Develop the 'performance in pictures' infographic to provide a more comprehensive summary of the Council's performance.	Jenny Legge	In progress	<p>The infographics are meant to be a good news board of things that have been done, but aren't monitored in the Council Strategy Delivery Plan. They give the public a wider view of what the Council does. Some additional information is provided in the written report. A previous Peer Challenge suggested that we should do more to celebrate our successes, so this was devised to do that.</p> <p>This feature was requested by the previous administration, but it can be removed/amended. Further guidance on what is meant by a "comprehensive summary" would be helpful.</p>
161	17/07/2024	<b>2023/24 Performance Report Year End</b> Provide historic data within the influencer measure dashboard.	Jenny Legge	Outstanding	<p>The appendix shows the 'sparklines' (which is historical data) as officers are currently unable to produce PDF pages of graphs from Inphase. However, the Performance Portal, provides full graphs of data back to whenever the data started reporting, which in most cases is April 2019.</p> <p>The vision for reporting was that information was accessed online rather than through paper. However, PDF reports are produced where officers are able to do so.</p>

**Actions arising from previous Meetings**

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

Ref	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Status	Comments/Update
162	17/07/2024	<b>2023/24 Performance Report Year End</b> Amend the outer ring of the sunburst diagram to more accurately reflect performance.	Jenny Legge	In progress	<p>Officers are working with InPhase to do this, but can't get the visualisation to work.</p> <p>The overall RAG rating is not just a count of measures, but looks at the variation from target of all the measures in the category. It calculates the variance of each measure from its target and then calculates the overall RAG from this. However, the measures aren't weighted for importance - it is purely numerical.</p> <p>If Members prefer just a basic count of red, amber and green measures within each goal/priority, then an overall RAG rating would be a judgement call, or some standard rules would need to be agreed as to how to calculate the RAG rating. Alternatively, Members may decide that an overall RAG rating is not needed.</p> <p>Officers are working on creating some simplified reports, instead of the ready-built ones provided by Inphase. These will be discussed with the Leader in due course.</p>
163	17/07/2024	<b>2023/24 Performance Report Year End</b> Chairman of Scrutiny Commission to discuss issues relating to Housing First and empty homes with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder.	Cllr Carlyne Culver	In Progress	Response awaited from Executive Portfolio Holder
164	17/07/2024	<b>Scrutiny Commission Work Programme</b> Brief the new Executive Portfolio Holder about the Community Safety Update.	Gordon Oliver	Complete	Email sent 29 July 2024
165	17/07/2024	<b>Scrutiny Commission Work Programme</b> Set up a work planning session with Executive Members and Corporate Board.	Gordon Oliver	In progress	A meeting has been arranged between the Scrutiny Chairman and the Leader of the Council.

**Last updated: 16 September 2024**

# Agenda Item 4.

Scrutiny Commission – 24 September 2024

## **Item 4 – Declarations of interest**

Verbal Item

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# Agenda Item 5.

Scrutiny Commission – 24 September 2024

## **Item 5 – Petitions**

Verbal Item

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# Building Communities Together Partnership



Scrutiny Commission  
September 2024

Nigel Lynn (WBC Chief Executive and Partnership Chair)

Supt. Andy Penrith (Area Commander and Partnership Vice-Chair)

# Building Communities Together Partnership



- The BCT Partnership
- 2023/24 Achievements
- 2024/25 Workstreams and Challenges
  - Crime Overview

# Building Communities Together Partnership



The BCT Partnership is the **Community Safety Partnership** for West Berkshire  
*Ensuring West Berkshire is a safe place to live, learn, work and visit*

## Legislation

Crime and Disorder Act 1998  
Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2005  
ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014  
Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Act 2021  
Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

**Statutory Partners:** West Berkshire Council, Thames Valley Police, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Probation and Health (Public Health and Integrated Care Board)

The BCT Partnership also has representatives from: Community and Voluntary Sector, Healthwatch, Registered Housing Providers, Faith Sector and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

# Building Communities Together Partnership



- **Aim:**  
To work in partnership to ensure that West Berkshire continues to be a safe place to live, work, learn and visit
- **Objectives:**
  - To reduce and prevent crime
  - To ensure that statutory responsibilities are fulfilled
  - To identify and respond to changes in the nature, incidence and severity of crime within West Berkshire
  - To safeguard those who are vulnerable
  - To help people and communities help each other and to engage with community safety related initiatives

The BCT Partnership also fulfils the role of the West Berkshire Prevent Partnership Board and the Youth Justice Management Board

The BCT Team carries out work on behalf of the BCT Partnership

# Building Communities Together Partnership



## 2023/4 - Achievements

### Channel – Section 36 Counter Terrorism And Security Act 2015 (CTSA)

- Annual Assurance Statement
- Channel Panel held monthly

### Prevent – Section 26 Counter Terrorism And Security Act 2015 (CTSA)

- Prevent Partnership Plan
- Annual Prevent Risk Assessment
- Local Risk Assessment

### Modern Slavery - Section 52 Modern Slavery Act 2015

- Annual Assurance Statement

### Serious Violence – Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

Implementation of Serious Violence Reduction Strategy 2023/24  
Quarterly returns to Home Office  
Grant funding to March 2025

### Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Act 2021

- Domestic Abuse Strategy and Action Plan 2023/27

# Building Communities Together Partnership



## Safer Streets Fund 5 Project

- £242K Grant funding awarded from Home Office via OPCC
- Purpose: To reduce anti-social behaviour
- Location: The Nightingales, Greenham
- Delivery of Interventions via a Project Co-Ordinator
- The Home Office and OPCC visited the 30 July Clear Up day  
*'We came away with such a positive impression of the projects and could really see how much hard work and passion goes into each one from both your teams and the delivery partners'*

**CCTV**

**3 Clear Up Days**

**Outreach Youth Work**

**School based Education Programme**



# Building Communities Together Partnership



## 2024/5 Workstreams

- Giving Tree Campaign November/December 2024
- Strategic needs analysis and refresh of Partnership Plan (statutory duty requirement)
- Needs analysis and refresh of Serious Violence Reduction Strategy 2024/25 (statutory duty requirement)

## Challenges

- Ongoing concern of civil unrest
- Implications of Martyn Law (Protect Duty)
- Impact of TVP move to Local Command Units (Berkshire West)



# Domestic Abuse

Domestic related crimes have fallen by 22% over the last 12 months, the biggest drop in the force. Our arrest rate for domestic related incidents on attendance is 75%, the highest in the force.

LPA	Previous	Current	% Change
+ Buckinghamshire	6,667	6,058	-9%
+ Milton Keynes	5,346	4,771	-11%
+ Cherwell and West Oxfordshire	3,572	3,356	-6%
+ Slough	3,515	3,272	-7%
+ Bracknell and Wokingham	3,345	3,080	-8%
+ South and Vale	3,137	2,792	-11%
+ Reading	3,019	2,723	-10%
+ Oxford	2,134	1,966	-8%
+ Windsor and Maidenhead	1,873	1,753	-6%
+ West Berkshire	1,982	1,552	-22%



# Serious Violence

\*Includes ABH and above

Although crime levels have stayed the same across West Berkshire during the last 12 months, we have had a small drop in positive outcomes resulting in a 2% decrease in our outcome rate.

LPA	Crime Levels			Positive Outcomes			Outcome Rate	
	Crime Previous	Crime Current	Change	Previous	Current	% Change	Previous	Current
Oxford	1396	1425	2%	261	303	16%	19%	21%
West Berkshire	890	891	0%	194	176	-9%	22%	20%
Windsor and Maidenhead	897	845	-6%	162	166	2%	18%	20%
Bracknell and Wokingham	1481	1411	-5%	263	250	-5%	18%	18%
South and Vale	1321	1356	3%	286	249	-13%	22%	18%
Buckinghamshire	3301	3046	-8%	612	527	-14%	19%	17%
Milton Keynes	2917	2785	-5%	492	484	-2%	17%	17%
Cherwell and West Oxfordshire	1843	1790	-3%	302	313	4%	16%	17%
Reading	1846	1744	-6%	289	264	-9%	16%	15%
Slough	1564	1513	-3%	198	209	6%	13%	14%



## Tackling Knife Crime

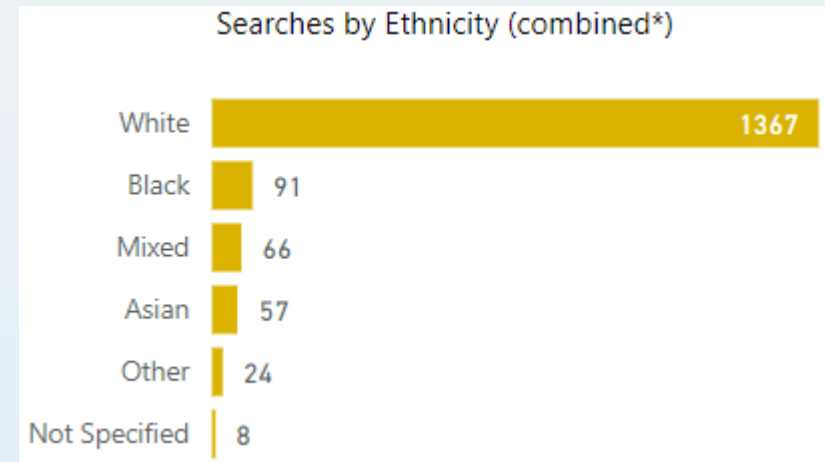
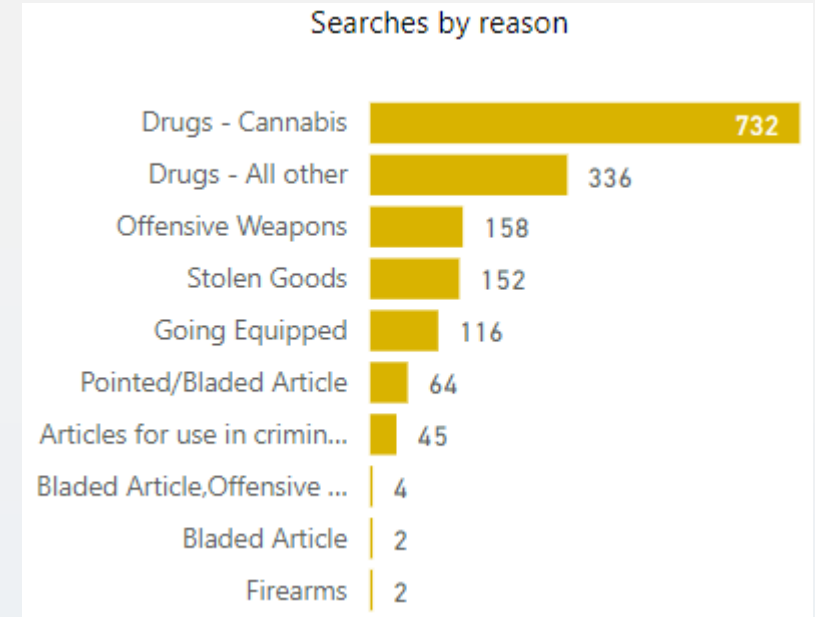
Despite a small rise over the last 12 months, knife enabled crime in West Berkshire remains low. Our outcome rate for all knife crime has fallen from 25% to 14.3%.

LPA	Crime Previous	Crime Current	Crime Change	% Change
Milton Keynes	275	221	-54	-20%
Buckinghamshire	206	189	-17	-8%
Slough	166	181	15	9%
Reading	167	153	-14	-8%
Oxford	95	90	-5	-5%
Bracknell and Wokingham	77	73	-4	-5%
South and Vale	60	59	-1	-2%
Cherwell and West Oxfordshire	66	56	-10	-15%
<b>West Berkshire</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17%</b>
Windsor and Maidenhead	40	25	-15	-38%



# Stop and Search

West Berkshire officers continue to carry out high numbers of searches to combat both drug supply and knife crime. 84.7% of those searched over the last 12 months were white.



LPA / Dept	Volume	Positive Outcomes	Positive Outcome Rate
⊕ Buckinghamshire LCU	2,084	566	27%
⊕ West Berkshire LPA	1,613	322	20%
⊕ Slough LPA	1,556	342	22%
⊕ Reading LPA	1,376	363	26%
⊕ Milton Keynes LPA	1,347	343	25%
⊕ Oxford LPA	1,181	311	26%
⊕ Windsor & Maidenhead LPA	1,129	410	36%
⊕ Cherwell & West Oxon LPA	1,071	352	33%
⊕ South Oxon & the Vale LPA	824	205	25%
⊕ Bracknell & Wokingham LPA	798	195	24%



# VAWG Crime levels and outcomes

Figures over the last 12 months show a 14% reduction in both VAWG related crimes and also positive outcomes, resulting in a 12.4% outcome rate. This is 1.8% above the force average.

LPA	Current Vs Previous LPA Levels			Crime % Change	Outcome % Change	Outcome rate previous	Outcome rate current
	Previous	Current	% Change				
South and Vale	517	418	-19.1%	-6%	-19%	14.6%	12.6%
West Berkshire	307	264	-14.0%	-14%	-14%	12.3%	12.4%
Oxford	397	357	-10.1%	-0%	-10%	13.4%	12.1%
Milton Keynes	666	652	-2.1%	-9%	-2%	9.9%	10.7%
Buckinghamshire	935	761	-18.6%	-8%	-19%	12.0%	10.5%
Cherwell and West Oxfordshire	455	402	-11.6%	-9%	-12%	10.5%	10.2%
Bracknell and Wokingham	403	354	-12.2%	-9%	-12%	10.3%	10.0%
Slough	324	319	-1.5%	-12%	-2%	8.8%	9.8%
Reading	438	342	-21.9%	-9%	-22%	11.1%	9.5%
Windsor and Maidenhead	221	178	-19.5%	-4%	-19%	10.3%	8.6%
<b>Thames Valley</b>	<b>4,657</b>	<b>4,034</b>	<b>-13.4%</b>	<b>-8%</b>	<b>-13%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>

# Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Thames Valley Police uses bespoke behavioural observation training to upskill frontline officers in risk management and to encourage proactivity in spotting predatory behaviour.

Once trained, plain-clothed officers are deployed into the night-time economy to identify predatory sexual behaviour.

Uniformed officers intervene to prevent this behaviour escalating into an offence.

Project Vigilant aims to prevent sexual violence by targeting predatory behaviour in the night-time economy.



West Berkshire has seen a number of Op Vigilant deployments in the town centres, but also at organised public events at Newbury Racecourse. The team have made a number of interventions preventing offences occurring and can make referrals to Circles UK (a charity that works with individuals to prevent offending). Further deployments to follow in September and November.





## Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)



**Cymorth i Ferched Cymru**  
Welsh Women's Aid

Welsh Women's Aid provided bystander training to officers and colleagues from the West Berkshire's VAWG partnership group.

A bystander means being aware of when someone's behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and choosing to intervene, if it's safe to do so, or equally getting someone to help, such as a friend or someone in authority.

Research shows that bystander intervention can be an effective way of stopping sexual assault before it happens, as bystanders play a key role in preventing, discouraging, and/or intervening when an act of violence has the potential to occur.

The team have delivered bystander training to private event organisers, pub watches & businesses. The aim is to deliver the training to a variety of organisations and run community sessions for the public, creating a safer environment for women and girls.

### **New: Bystander training**

We can all play a role in creating safe spaces for each other

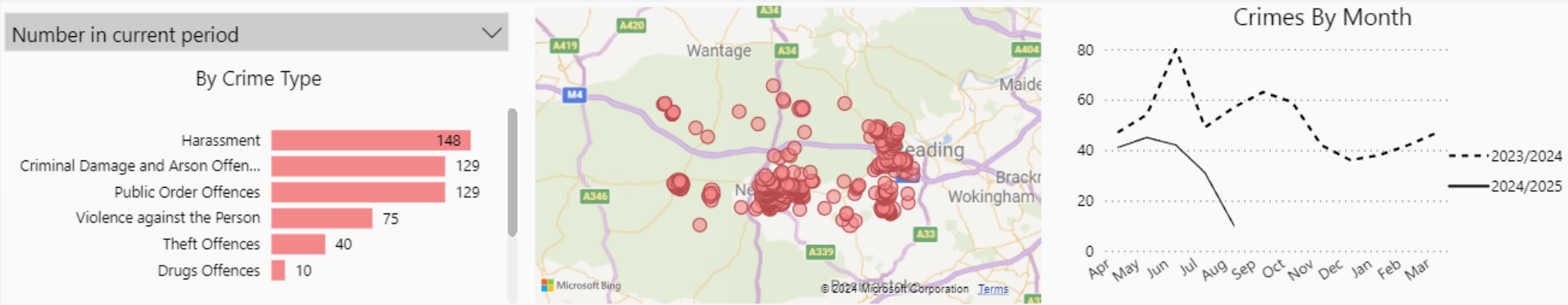




# Anti-Social Behaviour Crimes & Incidents

## ASB Overview - Crimes & Incidents in West Berkshire between August 2023 and July 2024

	Count Previous	Count Current	Count Change	% Change	Current Per 1000 Pop
Crime	610	543	-67	-11%	0.22
Incident	1,245	1,387	142	11%	0.55
Use of Power	28	48	20	71%	0.02
Breach of Power	8	7	-1	-13%	0.00



Our ASB crimes are down by 11% but we have experienced an 11% increase in ASB incidents.

We have seen an increase in ASB incidents at Pangbourne Meadows and the City Playground, Andover Road, Newbury. Both locations have active problem solving occurrences with partnership and community participation.



# Anti Social Behaviour – Powers (Inc. Sec 60 Stop & Search)

1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 to 14<sup>th</sup> August 2024 –

## Full Closure Orders (0-3 months)

Ely Grove, Newbury  
Roundfield, Bucklebury  
Longcroft Road, Thatcham

## Extended orders (3-6 months)

Roundfield, Bucklebury  
Longcroft Road, Thatcham  
Gilbert Court, Thatcham

## Newbury PSPO dispersals

16

## Thatcham PSPO dispersals

0



## Partial orders

Holywell Court, Thatcham  
Howarth Court, Newbury  
Kimbers Close, Newbury  
Horseshoe End, Newbury  
Woodlands View, Newbury

## Section 34 Dispersal orders

3 (Pangbourne Meadows)

## Section 60 Stop Search Authorisations

2 (The Nightingales)

## Community Protection Warning

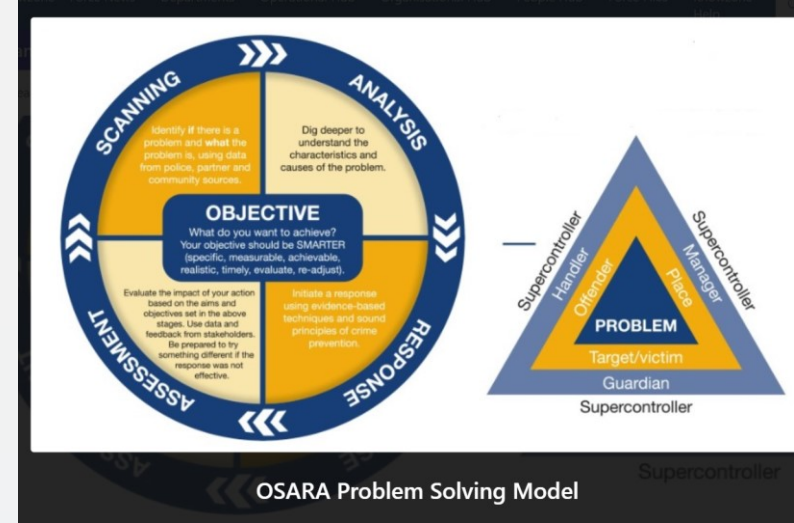
### Notices

10



# Neighbourhood Policing – Problem Solving The Nightingales, Newbury

Due to several reports of serious violence involving weapons in The Nightingales, a problem solving approach was adopted and a working group established in May 2023. Officers conducted a large scale community door to door survey to identify the groups priorities. Over the last 16 months the working group has:



- Secured daily hotspot patrols from officers / PCSOs, increasing police visibility in the locality
- Secured a house closure notice resulting in two male individuals being removed from Woodlands View
- 2x Community clear up days, helping to foster pride from the local community into the area they live
- Obtained a civil injunction excluding Callum Brown from entering into the Nightingales estate
- Secured funding from Safer Street 5, providing CCTV cameras, community clear up days, schools educational package around ASB / Violence, Street Guardians and a project co-ordinator.
- Jake Bozarth and Jake Blandford were convicted of witness intimidation for an attack on Callum Brown. Both received custodial sentences.
- Callum Brown has been charged with possession with intent to supply controlled drugs. He is currently awaiting trial.
- Community ASB survey completed with the same residents. The result has shown a significant reduction in serious violence and anti-social behaviour in The Nightingales estate.

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## Future Challenges:

Changes to Local Policing Structures – Local Command Units

Civil Unrest - lack of issues, but need to be vigilant (Misinformation)

Growing demand vs resource in the community safety team (PSPO requests, ASB challenges and Statutory duties around CT)

Supt. Andy Penrith – LPA Commander

[Andrew.Penrith@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:Andrew.Penrith@thamesvalley.police.uk)



# Adult Social Care Complaints Annual Report

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Scrutiny Commission
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	Sept 2024
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Patrick Clark
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	
<b>Report Author:</b>	Sue Brain

## 1 Purpose of the Report

To request the Adult Social Care Complaints Annual Report be reviewed and approval given for publication.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

The report be approved for publication.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implications relative to this request.
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implications relative to this request.
<b>Legal:</b>	We are required by law to publish an annual report of Adult Social Care (ASC) complaint activity.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	There is no risk identified relative to this request.
<b>Property:</b>	N/A.
<b>Policy:</b>	There are no policy implications relative to this request.

	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		
<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		We are required by law to produce and publish an annual report of ASC complaint activity.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	N/A
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## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Council is obliged to produce and publish an annual report of Adult Social Care (ASC) complaint activity.
- 4.2 These reports were previously ratified via the Customer First Programme Board which no longer exists.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the report be ratified by the Scrutiny Commission and approval given for publication.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.1 Appended is the 2023/24 ASC Complaints Annual Report. This is in draft format until final approval for publication is given, at which point an appropriate front cover will be applied.
- 5.2 We are seeking agreement for the report to be approved for publication.

### Background

- 5.3 Publication of an annual report into ASC complaint activity is a legal requirement.
- 5.4 This report was previously approved by the Customer First Programme Board, which no longer exists. It is considered the Scrutiny Commission is the most appropriate alternative for approval.

### Proposals

- 5.5 To approve the ASC Complaints Annual Report for publication.

## 6 Other options considered

No obvious alternative option identified.

## 7 Conclusion

It is proposed that the ASC Complaints Annual Report be approved for publication.

## 8 Appendices

Appendix A – ASC Complaints Annual Report 2023/24 (without final cover, to be included once final approval gained).

**Background Papers:**

None

**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes:  No:

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

**Wards affected:** All wards

**Officer details:**

Name: Sue Brain  
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## Annual Complaints Report 2023/24

### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the complaints which have been received by West Berkshire Council's Adult Social Care Service (ASC) during the financial year 2023/24.

The majority of complaints processed by ASC within West Berkshire are undertaken using the framework set out within the West Berkshire Adult Social Care Complaints Process. For the purpose of this report, and reflecting the period of time that this report covers, this is a two stage process as set out in 'West Berkshire Complaints Procedure – Adult Social Care (Nov 2010), however this is policy has since been revised.

**Informal Resolution:** Complaints that are logged with a service (such as a Care Home or within a locality team) are resolved informally at a local level. These complaints are not logged formally with the Complaints Manager and therefore are not included in the annual complaints return.

**Stage 1: Formal Investigation:** Complaints are formally investigated by an appropriate manager within the agreed timescale. Following this, if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response, a Complaints Meeting can be offered.

**Stage 2: Escalated Investigation** – investigation usually carried out at Service Manager or Service Director (if required) level.

In addition to this, a small number of complaints are processed using the Corporate Complaints framework. This process is used when the concerns being complained about relate to issues outside of ASC itself, such as the process used to invoice for care. These complaints are not included in the figures being analysed in this report, despite having come into the service in the first instance.

West Berkshire Council (WBC) believe that maintaining effective working relationships with service users and (where applicable) their families throughout their involvement with ASC is an important part of achieving the best outcomes for our service users and have continued to adopt a Restorative Practice approach to complaints where possible.

Where it has not been possible to resolve a dispute using the ASC Complaints Process, the complainant will be directed to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

Should it become apparent that a service user or family member, is repeatedly raising the same or similar concerns with the Council or other bodies and that this is having a negative impact on carrying out any on-going work, but they have not officially raised a complaint, the Complaints Manager has the discretion to enter these concerns into the complaints process to help achieve a resolution. In these circumstances, the concerns do not have to have been presented to the Council as a complaint.

## APPENDIX A – ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Occasionally the Council may deem that it is necessary to implement the Persistent and Unreasonable Complainants Process.

This process can be used;

- Where a complaint has been responded to fully and a complainant continues to raise the same or similar issues.
- Where the frequency and/or length of complaints from an individual is preventing the day-to-day working of the ASC teams. In these circumstances the Council can introduce a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) arrangement and /or can specify the frequency and method of contact with a particular team or the Council as a whole.

The full details of the Persistent and Unreasonable Complainants process can be found on the Council's website.

A copy of the Annual Complaints Report is published on the Council's website each year.

### Complaints: A Definition

A complaint is described as an expression of dissatisfaction with the service the Council has provided. Feedback from users is important to the Council as it provides not only an opportunity to identify why people have found our services unsatisfactory, but also a means of identifying how the services being provided can be improved.

Any adult receiving care from WBC is entitled to use the complaints process. We also accept complaints from their family or representatives who support them. In this instance we would require consent from the service user to pursue the complaint unless there is already existing authority for their representative to act on their behalf. Every person who makes use of the complaints procedure is advised of their right to assistance from an independent advocate and is given information about how to access the advocacy service if they wish to do so.

Complaints may be received via any employee or office at any level of WBC and are then directed to the relevant department depending on the nature of the complaint.

### Complaints Figures and Statistical Analysis 2023/24

#### Introduction

During the financial year 2023/24 **55** complaints were received by ASC Services.

We note this figure represents a slight increase in the number of complaints received by ASC during 2022/23 when **45** complaints were received. 55 complaints represents an increase of 22% compared to the number of complaints received during the previous year. This % increase appears high because there was a low starting figure. It is noted that it is following the trend of a steady year on year rise in the number of complaints we have received since the pandemic. We are also showing an increase

## APPENDIX A – ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

in the complaints made per 100 service users (see Table 1 below). On a positive note, we have not yet reached pre-Covid levels in relation to the number of complaints received (2019-20 when 82 ASC complaints were recorded).

As we saw last year, the complaints we have received during 2023/24 have often taken longer to resolve than in previous years. We have, however, yet again seen a very positive outcome this year in the number of cases that progressed to the LGSCO for a decision, which suggests that, overall, the complaints process within WBC ASC is working effectively and service users and their families feel that we resolve complaints fairly and thoroughly.

**Table 1:**

Year	Total number people in receipt of long-term ASC service	Total number of Complaints	Complaints per 100 Service Users
2018/19	2114	146	6.9
2019/20	2161	82	3.8
2020/21	2222	41	1.8
2021/22	2252	39	1.7
2022/23	2335	45	1.9
2023/24	2423	55	2.3

**Table 2:**

Quarter	Complaints by Quarter				Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Volume	24	10	9	12	55

**Table 1** illustrates the number of complaints received in relation to the number of adults in receipt of a long-term service per year.

**Table 2** illustrates an analysis of the complaints received by quarter which show an even spread of complaints received throughout the year apart from a significant rise during Q1. The cause of the rise can be attributed to multiple complaints being submitted by an individual during this period as well as a number of service users making duplicate complaints about a particular issue. In one case this was the service users living in a group home who each complained about the same issue and, in another case, a married couple both raising a complaint about an issue that affected them both.

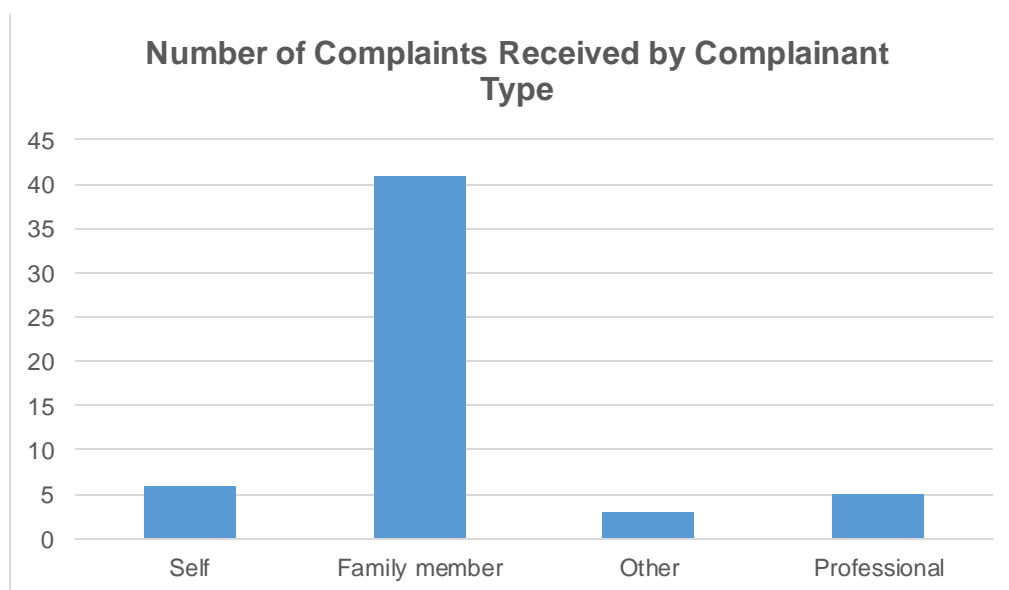
## **Compliance with Timescales**

The national timescales set out for ASC complaints are used to measure compliance for all complaints arising within ASC Services.

Overall compliance with time scales has been positive during 2023/24 with **98%** of all complaints being responded to in the first instance within the 20 working days timeframe. The one complaint response that was out of the agreed 20 day response time was due to the investigator being unwell.

## **Complaints Received by Complainant Type**

- Following the same pattern as last year, the majority of the complaints received by ASC Services were made on behalf of the service user by other family members (75%). This remains entirely consistent with last year (74% being recorded in 2022/23).
- 11% of the complaints were made by the service user themselves. Of these, none used or required the services of a professional advocate. This figure reflects a decrease on last year's reported figures (22% in 2022/23).
- 9% of complaints were submitted by professionals.
- 5% of complaints were made by others.



## **Complaints from Service Users**

Enabling complaints from service users continues to be an important mechanism for ensuring the experience of the people who use our services informs our service design and delivery. Complaints from service users themselves help us to ensure that their voices are heard and that we can, where justified, make improvements to the services we are delivering to them.

Improving the number of complaints received by service users directly is an area that we have consistently highlighted for action in previous years. We have put measures

## APPENDIX A – ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

in place (i.e the Review Team now take the Complaints Leaflet out with them when undertaking an annual review to give to service users) to try to improve this but unfortunately, despite our efforts, this has not been successful. This year we have seen a decrease in the number of people who have made a complaint on their own behalf which is both frustrating and a negative indicator for the year.

When a complaint is made on behalf of a service user all attempts are made to seek direct consent from them for the complaint to proceed, as well as to ensure that the complaint being made accurately reflects their views. Where possible we will then pick up the complaint directly from the service user themselves.

6 complaints were received from service users during 2023/24 in comparison to 10 in 2022/23.

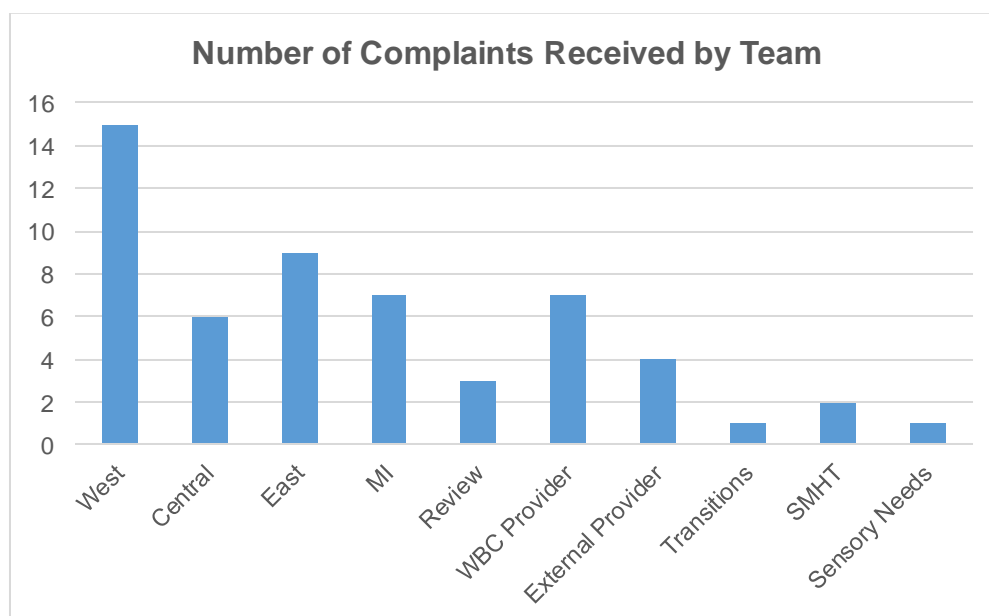
The figures for 2023/24 continue to highlight that most complaints (41 – or 75%) received by ASC continue to come from other family members who are acting on behalf of the service user. Of these, 3 were made after the service user had sadly passed away. Of the remaining 38 complaints, 7 were made by a parent and 28 in relation to older people and the complaints were usually made by the son/daughter or a spouse. The remaining 3 complaints were made by another family member or a friend.

### Multiple Complaints

By examining the specific detail relating to who has made complaints during 2023/24 there have been occurrences of multiple complaints being made by a single person. These, however, did not meet threshold for implementing The Persistent and Unreasonable Complainants Process.

### Complaints Received by Team

Of the 55 complaints made, the allocation of complaint by service is as follows:



**Data**

<b>Team</b>	<b>Volume</b>	<b>%</b>
West	15	27%
Central	6	11%
East	9	16%
MI	7	13%
Review	3	5%
WBC Provider	7	13%
External Provider	4	7%
Transitions	1	2%
SMHT	2	4%
Sensory Needs	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>

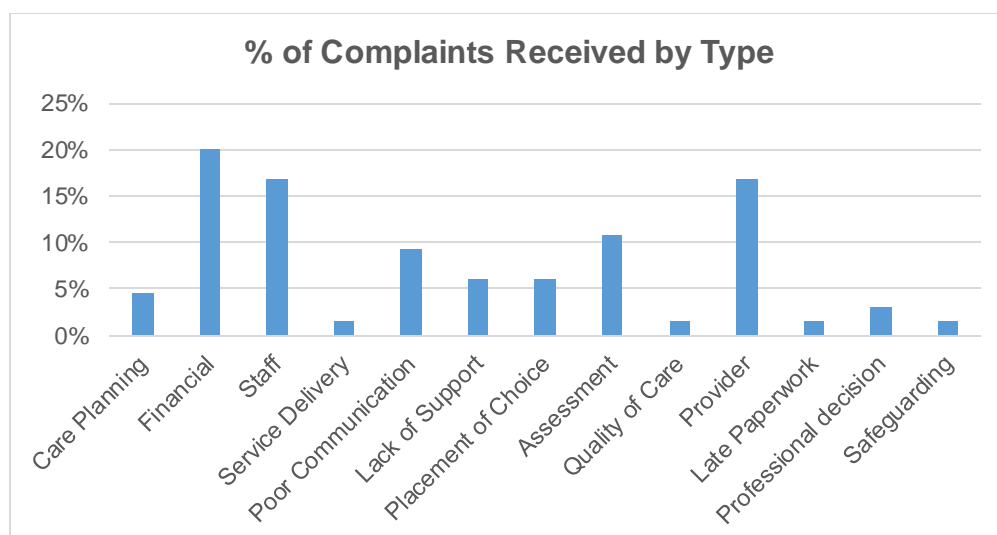
As with previous reports West locality are seen to have the most complaints. It is, however, fair to note they have a slightly larger number of service users in their area than the other locality teams. However, generally the complaints this year are spread evenly across all of the locality teams. Complaints in relation to WBC provider services have increased by 3 this year. It should be noted that multiple complaints in relation to one of the WBC residential homes were made by a single complainant. Complaints relating to external providers have reduced by one this year and remain very low, which is a positive reflection on the services that WBC ASC are commissioning.

**Types/ Causes of Complaints**

NB: A complaint can be complex in its nature sometimes comprising of multiple issues and there may not always be only a single cause. Therefore, it should be noted the number of complaint types recorded will exceed the total number of complaints received.

The table below is included in order to provide information about the areas of ASC that have received complaints about during 2023/24.

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### Data

Nature of Complaint	Vol	%
Care Planning	3	5%
Financial	13	20%
Staff	11	17%
Service Delivery	1	2%
Poor Communication	6	9%
Lack of Support	4	6%
Placement of Choice	4	6%
Assessment	7	11%
Quality of Care	1	2%
Provider	11	17%
Late Paperwork	1	2%
Professional decision	2	3%
Safeguarding	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

- The most common reason for making a complaint during 2023/24 was financial issues (charging for services). This is a slight shift from last year when the highest volume of complaints made were in relation to staff. Complaints relating to financial matters has increased in numerical terms during 2023/24 but represents a slightly higher proportion of complaints in relation to last year (when it was 19%). The increase in numbers was expected as the cost-of-living crisis continues and was forecast in last year's report, however as the complaints in this area relate mainly to charges for services that the service user did not feel that they had received, this therefore cannot be directly linked to the current cost of living concerns.



- The second most prevalent reasons for making a complaint in 2023/24 relate to both the categories of staff and providers. Complaints made in relation to staff have decreased by five in comparison to last year which is a more positive indicator. As per last year, complaints made about staff typically relate to situations where people feel that they have not been treated with courtesy or professionalism. We are cognisant that these complaints may also be influenced by people objecting to the outcome of the work by a particular staff member. These complaints can relate to both Council staff and staff from external providers commissioned by the Council. Of the 11 complaints that included staff attitude as an element, 7 (64%) were either upheld or partly upheld. This is of concern although it must be noted that this is in the context of extremely low numbers.
- Every complaint about a member of staff that is either upheld or partially upheld is referred to that member of staff through the line management route and reflection in supervision is encouraged. This is in addition to any other actions that may have been considered appropriate in the circumstances.

### Complaints Relating to Providers

In 2023/24 the number of complaints relating to providers (11) was a significant increase compared to the previous years reported figure (5) and represented the second highest area of complaints. An example being:

*“No relationship between service user and carers.  
Lack of training for carers.  
Not enough support for carers.  
Language barrier between service user and carers.  
Not convinced carers understood Alzheimer’s.  
Did not carry out full personal care.  
No-one taking responsibility for problems and concerns.  
Not informed when carers were changed.  
Service user’s personal information not kept up to date.”*

A total of 11 complaints were made that related to providers, which equates to 17% of the overall number of complaints made.

Of the 11 complaints about providers made, the Council were made aware of only 4 complaints about services delivered by external providers commissioned by WBC. However, we do know that external providers receive additional complaints directly and that the Council are not notified of those unless those providers have not been able to resolve them satisfactorily

7 of the complaints made in relation to providers concerned the Council’s in-house services. This is higher than the previous year (4). Of the complaints made in relation to in-house services, 4 were made about the quality of care (3 by the same person in the same quarter). However, none of these complaints were upheld. 2 complaints

## APPENDIX A – ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

were made in relation to charges and 1 was made in relation to service delivery (a broken lift).

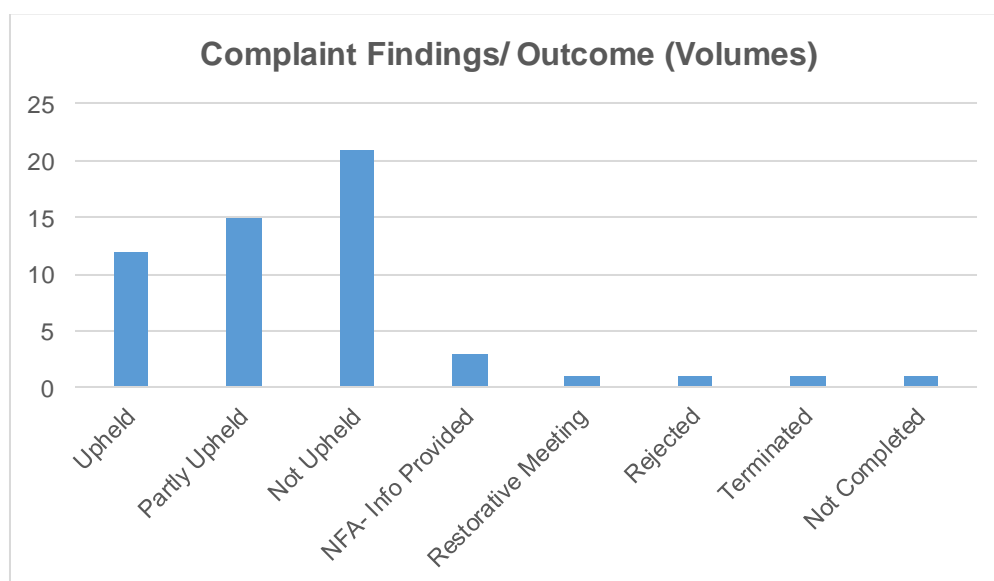
### Emerging Areas of Concern

Whilst these must be taken in the context of a small overall number of complaints the following can be identified of potential areas of concern:

- Complaints about staff will always be an area for concern, however these do need to be looked at in the context described above. We further recognise that the number of complaints about staff (11) is against the backdrop of 2423 people receiving a long-term service from ASC in this reporting period.
- Complaints relating to finances and charging have seen the highest increase this year compared to last year. This is of no great surprise, and we expect to see this theme to continue until the cost-of-living crisis eases.
- These are the same areas of concern identified in last year's report. Whilst the complaints relating to finances were predicted, complaints relating to staff have improved this year in that there is a lower volume reducing from 16 in 2022-23 to 11 this year. This represents a drop of 31%.

### Complaints Findings/ Outcomes

In summary (based on 55 complaints received during 2023/24):



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### Data

Outcome of Complaint	Volume	%
Upheld	12	22%
Partly Upheld	15	27%
Not Upheld	21	38%
NFA- Info Provided	3	5%
Restorative Meeting	1	2%
Rejected	1	2%
Terminated	1	2%
Not Completed	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>

In summary, for the 2023/24 reporting period:

- **22%** of the complaints received were upheld (13% upheld in 2022/23)
- **38%** of the complaints received were not upheld (36% not upheld in 2022/23).
- **27%** of complaints were partially upheld (29% partially upheld in 2022/23).

We have seen a significant % increase in the number of complaints that were upheld whilst the number of complaints partially upheld and not upheld remains consistent with last year. The increase in those complaints that were upheld is concerning as it suggests there may have been a decline in the service users experience over the past year.

Of the remaining complaints:

- In **2%** of cases the complaints were refused (as the issue being complained about was still an open case and work was still underway).
- In **2%** of cases the complaint was terminated at the request of the complainant.
- In **5%** of cases the complaint was concluded at the informal resolution stage and the complaint did not progress any further. This outcome has been recorded because the complainant was provided with either further information or an explanation in relation to why something had happened, and the formal complaint was therefore concluded at this stage (NFA – information provided and NFA – complaint resolved).
- In **2%** of cases the complaint was resolved by way of a restorative meeting.
- In **2%** of cases the complaint remains incomplete at the time of writing this report (due to an open Safeguarding Enquiry).

### Complaints Progressed Beyond Local Resolution

Where it has not been possible to resolve a complaint via restorative practice or via the Council's complaints process, complainants may choose to approach an external regulatory body; The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO will determine if the complaint that is presented to them meets their criteria for investigation.

## **APPENDIX A – ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

Of the complaints made in 2023/24 only 1 progressed to the LGSCO during the year. This complaint was not investigated by the LGSCO as it had not completed the WBC Complaints Process. Therefore, they directed it to the Council, and it was subsequently resolved by the Council ASC Complaint Process.

Whilst 2023/24 has been yet another positive year for the ASC in relation to LGSCO referrals, it is considered highly unlikely that this trend will persist into the 2024/25 reporting year.

### **Comparison with Neighbouring Local Authorities**

Looking at complaint trends in neighbouring local authorities that are represented at the Southern Regional Complaint Managers Group, WBC does not appear to be following the general trend in ASC complaints.

The 2023/2024 complaint figures received from neighbouring authorities include:

BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole): 180 ASC complaints (196 in 2022/23). 25 complaints referred to the LGSCO (14 in 2022/23).

West Sussex: 293 complaints (306 in 2022/23).

East Sussex: 376 complaints (430 in 2022/23).

Portsmouth CC: 59 complaints (74 in 2022/23). 3 complaints referred to the LGSCO.

Whilst each of the above authorities may record the number of ASC users in different ways to WBC, each can confirm that the general trend has been for a reduction in the number of ASC complaints in 2023/24. This has not been reflected in WBC.

However, WBC ASC had had far fewer LGSCO referrals in comparison to neighbouring authorities which might suggest that the way complaints are dealt with in WBC is more successful. This is a suggestion only and not the conclusion of rigorous analysis.

We are mindful that we work hard to identify potential complaints at an early stage and manage them informally. These are therefore not recorded nor translate into formal complaints. It is possible that other Local Authorities deal with emerging complaints differently and record them all regardless of whether they progress or not.

Another possibility that must be considered is that people are not complaining about ASC services in West Berkshire because they are on the whole satisfied with them. We have no concerns about the accessibility of the ASC Complaints Process.

### Complaint Actions Carried Over to 2023/24.

During 2023/24 the ASC Complaints Process has been revised and was given final Corporate Board approval in April 2024. As this was an action carried over from last years' Annual Report it seems appropriate to mention it here.

Changes made to the process have made it more efficient for both complainants and the Council. Being mindful of workloads for investigating managers, the process now allows us to refer complainants to the LGSCO at an earlier stage when we feel that the investigation has been fully completed from the Councils perspective at Stage 1.

We retain the option to progress to a Stage 2 if the complainant can provide further information or if the Complaints Manager feels that the Stage 1 investigation did not fully address the complaint.

We offer complainants the opportunity to meet with us and discuss the Stage 1 complaint response and, should further information come to the attention of the Complaints Manager at this time, then a Stage 2 investigation will be undertaken.

### Examples of Compliments Received During 2023/2024

The number of compliments received by ASC continues to outweigh the number of complaints. In 2023/24 WBC ASC received a total of 208 recorded compliments in relation to both services and individual practitioners (an increase on the 153 recorded last year). Service users and their families gave positive and heartfelt feedback to many different teams including our Shared Lives Team, our DOLS Team, our Information Co-Ordinator and our Financial Charging and Assessment Team along with each of the locality and specialist teams. Some examples of the types of compliments we have received are listed below:

*I can't thank you enough for your help and support. Of all the services I have contact with I think Shared Lives are one of the best, you should all be very proud of yourselves.*

*I would like to personally thank you and your team for all your outstanding work regarding the cancellation of the top up contract. I have just spoken to my sister who is currently overwhelmed with relief. I have to comment on the remarkable help we have been given throughout the whole process of placing my father in the adult care system. It has not been an easy road for my family, but West Berkshire adult care and your team have made the process a little easier.*

*I'm emailing so say how impressed I am with the services provided and signposted, for those with dementia, by West Berks Council. The WBC services and the signposting from your directory of services and dementia support pages contains so much information to help those in many areas of west berks – it is a good example of best practice.*

*We just wanted to say a huge thank you for arranging emergency care over the weekend for our dad. It was such a relief to know that we had care arranged for dad*

## APPENDIX A – ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

*whilst we were waiting for the ambulance for mum. You have no idea how much we appreciated the support being there when we truly needed it and the carers were absolutely brilliant.*

*Thank you so much for the kind, supportive and generous work you have done with my father. I will always remember it.*

*You dealt with things very quickly and kept her informed as to what was happening. She said the whole process from the start to the review was a very positive one.*

*You've helped so much in me finding my strength.*

### **Conclusion**

Based on the complaints figures during 2023/24, WBC is reporting a 22% increase in the number of complaints received about ASC services in comparison to 2022/2023. Whilst we acknowledge the increase, this is not overly concerning as the figures remain very low and reflect the lower end of the general trend in our neighbouring authorities. We have, however, noted that our neighbouring authorities are generally reporting a reduction in complaints received this year in comparison to last year so we do need to be mindful that this has not been the case in WBC ASC.

2023/24 has been a positive year for referrals to the LGSCO but this trend is not forecast to continue into 2024/25.

The Complaints Process has been revised and improved.

The Complaints Team continue to offer both virtual and face to face meetings in order to offer complainants flexibility about how their complaints are managed.

ASC continues to receive a large volume of outstanding compliments from our service users and their families praising both the efforts of our staff and the services that we provide to support the people of West Berkshire.

Despite the low number of complaints and higher number of compliments, WBC is not complacent and continues to strive to offer the best possible service to our clients and their families in spite of challenging environmental and societal factors that have, and continue to, exist.

# Children’s Social Care Complaints Annual Report 2023/24

**Committee considering report:** Scrutiny Commission

**Date of Committee:** 24 September 2024

**Portfolio Member:** Councillor Heather Codling

**Date Portfolio Member agreed report:**

**Report Author:** Rachel Brickman

## 1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the management of and performance in responding to complaints in children’s social care.
- 1.2 To request the Children Social Care Complaints Annual Report be reviewed and approval given for publication.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

That Scrutiny Commission notes the Annual Complaints report for 2023/24 and approve publication.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implication relative to this request.
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implication relative to this request.
<b>Legal:</b>	We are required by law to public an annual report of Children’s Social Care complaint activity.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	There is no risk identified relative to this request.

<b>Property:</b>	N/A.			
<b>Policy:</b>	There are no policy implication relative this request.			
	<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>	N/A			

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Council is required to write and publish an annual report of Children’s Social Care complaint activity.
- 4.2 This report outlines complaints received, and themes to enable any learning to be considered for the service.
- 4.3 Please note that future annual report will include SEND and Education as a Children’s Services Complaints Annual Report.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.1 Appended is the 2023/24 Children’s Social Care Annual Report.

### Background

- 5.2 Publication of an annual report into Children’s Social Care complaint activity is a statutory requirement.
- 5.3 This report was previously approved by the Customer First Programme Board, which no longer exists. Therefore, it has been requested that Scrutiny Committee approve along with Adult Social Care Annual Report.

### Proposals

- 5.4 To approve the Children Social Care Annual Report for publication.

## 6 Other options considered

No alternative options.

## 7 Conclusion

It is proposed the Children’s Social Care Complaints Annual Report 2023/24 be approved for publication.

## 8 Appendices

Appendix A – Children’s Social Care Annual Report 2023/24

**Background Papers:**

None

**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes:  No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council’s position
- Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

**Wards affected:** N/A

**Document Control**

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# Children and Family Services - Complaints and Compliments

## Annual Report 2023/2024

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## 1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the complaints which have been received by West Berkshire's Children & Family Services during the financial year 2023/24.

## 2. Complaints Processes used within West Berkshire Children & Family Services

2.1. Children Act (1989) complaints framework. This consists of 3 sequential stages:

- Stage 1: Local Resolution
- Stage 2: Independent Investigation
- Stage 3: Review Panel

2.2. In addition to the Children Act complaints, a number of complaints are processed using the Corporate Complaints framework. This is a 2 Stage process and is used when the concerns being complained about relate not to a child, but to an interaction between an adult and the Local Authority. This process consists of:

- Stage 1: Local Resolution
- Stage 2: Investigation by a Senior Manager from an unrelated service within the Council

2.3. Where it has not been possible to resolve a dispute using the processes outlined above, the complainant will be directed to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

2.4. West Berkshire Council believe that maintaining effective working relationships with children, young people and their families, throughout the time that they are involved with Social Care, is an important part of achieving the best outcomes for children and families. The Council has adopted a Restorative Practise approach to complaints to help promote effective working practices.

2.5. Complainants will be offered the opportunity to progress their concerns via a restorative meeting or meetings in the first instance. It is for the complainant to decide if they wish to take this route to try and resolve their concerns. They can, at any point in the process, choose to move back to the appropriate complaints process.

2.6. Should it become apparent that a service user or family member, is repeatedly raising the same or similar concerns with the Social Work team or other bodies and that this is having a negative impact on carrying out an assessment, or any on-going work, the Complaints Manager has the discretion to enter these concerns into the complaints process to help achieve a resolution. In these circumstances, the concerns do not have to have been presented to the Council as a complaint.

- 2.7. On occasions the Council will make use of Access Plans to help facilitate effective communication, this is usually done where a complainant is asking for reasonable adjustments to be made to help accommodate specified aspects of their disability.
- 2.8. Occasionally the Council may deem that it is necessary to implement the Persistent and Unreasonable Complainants Process. This process can be used;
- Where a complaint has been responded to fully and a complainant continues to raise the same or similar issues.
  - Where the frequency and/or length of complaints from an individual is preventing the day-to-day working of the Social Work teams.
- 2.9. In these circumstances the Council can introduce a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) arrangement and /or can specify the frequency and method of contact with a particular team or the Council as a whole.
- 2.10. The full details of the Persistent and Unreasonable Complainants process can be found on the Council's website
- 2.11. A copy of the Annual Complaints Report is published on the Council's website each year.

### **3. Matters which fall outside the Council's Complaints Processes**

- 3.1. Any legal matters – This includes Care Proceedings and parental disputes around contact with children where courts are involved
- 3.2. Education Complaints
- 3.3. Complaints about services which are provided by organisations over which the Council has no oversight.

### **4. Complaints: A Definition**

- 4.1. A complaint is described as an expression of dissatisfaction with a service which the Council has provided. Feedback from children, young people and families is important to the Council as this provides not only an opportunity to identify why people have found our services unsatisfactory, but also a means of identifying how the services being provided can be improved.
- 4.2. Any adult or child receiving a service from West Berkshire Council is entitled to use one of the Council's complaints process. The Complaints Managers will determine which process is the most appropriate route for each complaint.
- 4.3. Complaints can also be accepted from a family member or representatives who is deemed to be acting as an agent for the service user. Every child or young person who makes use of the complaint's procedure will be advised of their right



to assistance from an independent advocate and is given information about how to access the advocacy service if they wish to do so.

- 4.4. Complaints may be presented via any employee of West Berkshire Council. Once received the complaint will be directed to the relevant department within the Council for investigation.

## 5. Complaints Figures and Statistical Analysis Children & Family Services 2023/24

- 5.1. During the financial year 2023/24 Children & Family Services received **193** complaints. This is slightly higher than the number of complaints received during 2022/23 when **183** complaints were received. This year the number of repeat complaints received is lower than that seen in 2022/23.

### 5.2. Volume of Complaints Received in 2023/24

As shown in table 1 below the percentage of referrals received by Children & Family Services which result in a complaint being made has fallen slightly since 2020/21.

	Total number of CFS Referrals	Total number of Complaints	% of referrals complained about
2016/17	1667	148	8.8%
2017/18	1620	160	9.8%
2018/19	1686	149	8.8%
2019/20	1654	143	8.6%
2020/21	1451	154	10.6%
2021/22	1990	210	10.5%
2022/23	1670	<b>183</b>	<b>8.4%</b>
2023/24	1718	<b>193</b>	11.2%

Table 1: Percentage of Children & Family Referrals Complained About

### 5.3. Breakdown of the Complaint's Processes Used to Investigate Complaints

Of the **193** complaints received **9** were considered using the Children's Services Statutory complaints process, **94** were processed using the corporate complaints process, **1** was processed using the Child Protection complaints process and **2** were processed using alternative resolution.

A further **87** contacts were processed as enquiries.

Process Used	Number of Complaint Investigated using each process	Percentage of Complaints investigated using each process
Alternative Resolution (Restorative)	2	1.0%
Childrens	9	4.7%
Corporate	94	48.7%
CP Conference Decision	1	0.5%
Enquiry	87	45.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 2: Breakdown of Complaints Processes Used

#### 5.4. Compliance with Timescales

5.4.1. The timescales set out for statutory Children’s Services complaints are used to measure time scale compliance for all complaints arising within Children & Family Services.

5.4.2. Overall compliance with time scales has decreased during 2023/24 with a drop from 90% in 2022/23 to **86%** of all complaints being responded to within the allowable 20 working day **in 2023/24**.

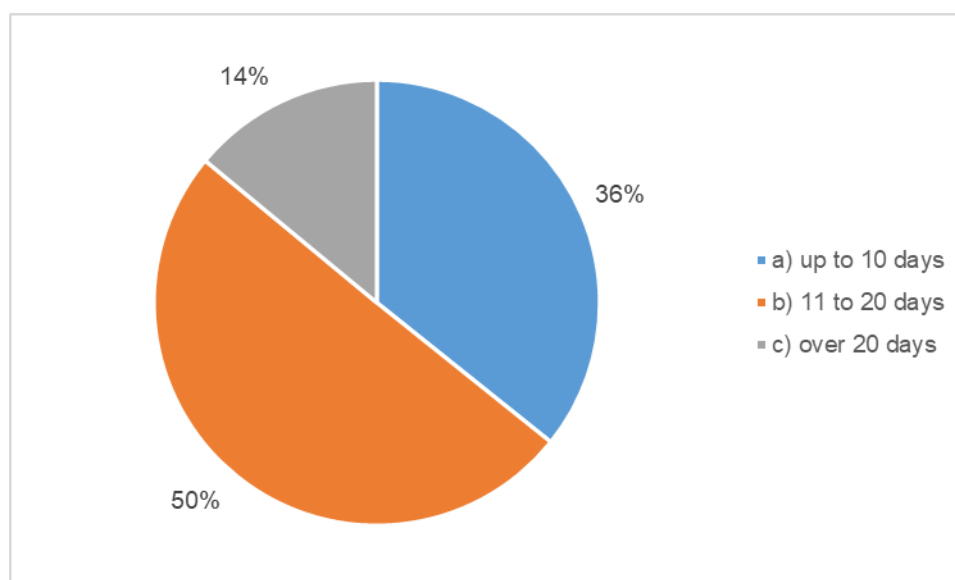


Figure 1: Compliance with Timescales

5.4.3. Table 3 below shows that in a year-on-year comparison of compliance with timescales, both the number of complaints responded to within 10 working

days and 20 working days has dropped during 2023/24, with **36%** of complaints being responded to within 10 working days and **86%** of complaints being responded to within 20 working days.

Compliance with Time Scales Year on Year Comparison								
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
10 Working Days	69%	70%	70%	72%	63%	70%	<b>46%</b>	<b>36%</b>
20 Working Days	99%	94%	85%	87%	96%	97%	<b>90%</b>	<b>86%</b>
Over 20 working days	1%	6%	15%	13%	4%	3%	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>

*Table 3: Compliance with Time Scale Year on Year Comparison*

5.4.4. During 2023/24 Children & Family Services has seen a high level of staff turn over in some of the long term social work teams, which has at times lead to a significant number of posts being either vacant or being held by locum workers. Where this has been the case, it has been necessary for officers to prioritise the delivery of outward facing safeguarding services rather than the 10 working day complaints respons timescale. While it remains the case that there is a national shortage of Social Workers, the Local Authority has worked hard to recruit permanent workers and it is anticipated that this will help to facilitate the stability needed to respond to the majority of complaints within 10 working days.

5.4.5. **27** of the **193** complaints received during **2023/24** exceeded the 20 working day time scale. This equates to **14%** of the complaints received. Of these

- **27** complaints an extended response periods was agreed in **9** cases
- Seeking an extended response period is allowable within the complaints process. The case recording shows that these complaints were responded to within the agreed extended period.
- **11** of the over timescale responses were provided within 21 – 30 working days.
- **6** complaint ran significantly overtime timescale in error.

5.4.6. A consideration of the underlying complaints recording shows that where complaints responses took significantly longer than 20 working days to complete this was due to the complexity of the complaints being raised, however, it is also apparent that staffing pressures have made it more

difficult to respond within 10 working days and that this pressure was a factor in tipping **11** responses into the 21 – 30 day category.

5.4.7. Difficulties in the recruitment of Social Workers is currently a national issue and is something which West Berkshire Council is working hard to overcome.

### 5.5. Breakdown of Over Timescale Complaints Responses

Days Taken	Number of complaints	Reason
21-30	11	Administrative delay in sending out completed response. Finalising details for complex responses Complainant continued to represent aspects of their complaint to different officers or agencies. Restrictions on contact in place which set different timescales.
31-40	8	Extension agreed. Complainant continued to represent aspects of their complaint to different officers within the Council. Third party complaint could not be provided until after the subject had received the primary complaints response. Alternative Resolution - PWS Review – Alternative timescale agreed. Length of complaint. Capacity Alternative timescale agreed
Over 41	8	Extension agreed. Length of complaint Capacity Oversight by SW team

*Table 4: Breakdown of Over Timescale Complaints Responses*

## **5.6. Analysis of Who Made Complaints to Children & Family Services During 2023/24**

- As in previous years the majority of complaints **72.5%** were made by the parents of children and young people.
- A further **10.4%** of complaints were received from either a grandparent, step-parents or other relatives without parental responsibility.
- **5.5%** of complaints were made by professionals (for example by a school or Local MP)
- **5.5%** of complaints received were made by young people.
- **2.2%** of complaints received were made by Foster Carers.
- The final **4.4%** of complaints were received from others.

<b>Volumes Received By Who Made Complaint</b>	<b>Number of Complaints received</b>	<b>Percentage of total number of complaints received</b>
<b>Foster Carer</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
<b>Grandparent</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>Member of Parliament (MP)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2.6%</b>
<b>Other External Body</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
<b>Other Relative</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<b>Parent</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>73.4%</b>
<b>Partner</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Professional</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Young Person</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Table 5: Breakdown of Who Complaints were received from.*

5.6.1. 2023/24 has seen an increase in complaints from Grandparents and other relatives from 2.2% in 2022/23 to 9.9% this year.

## **5.7. Complaints from Young People**

5.7.1. **10** Complaints were received from young people during 2023/24 this represents **5.2%** of the complaints received. This is a slight increase on the previous year when **3.3%** of complaints were raised by young people.

5.7.2. It is recognised nationally that the number of complaints from young people is low. Where a young person is undecided about making use of the complaints process, their Social Worker will offer them the opportunity to have a conversation with the Complaints Manager and/or the Advocacy Service to talk through how the complaint service works and how to make a complaint or make an enquiry. Children & Family Services welcomes all forms of feedback from the young people making use of their services.

### 5.8. Complaints received by team

5.8.1. As in previous years the breakdown of reason for complaint by team is largely reflective of the service which these teams provide with the two Family Safeguarding teams and the Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT) receiving a range of complaints while the Family Placement Team (FPT) received complaints associated with fostering. The level of staff churn which has been experienced during this year can be seen in the number of complaints in which concerns around service provision have been raised, where some families have experienced delays in the allocation of a case and multiple changes of work within a short period of time. As has been seen in previous years a significant number of the complaints being raised fall outside the remit of Children and Family Services, because the matters being complained about are matters which fall under the jurisdiction of the court.

5.8.2. Where the concerns being raised are complex and cover more than one team, or where there is a pattern of one complainant or family group presenting multiple complaints, these complaints will be held by the Complaints Team.

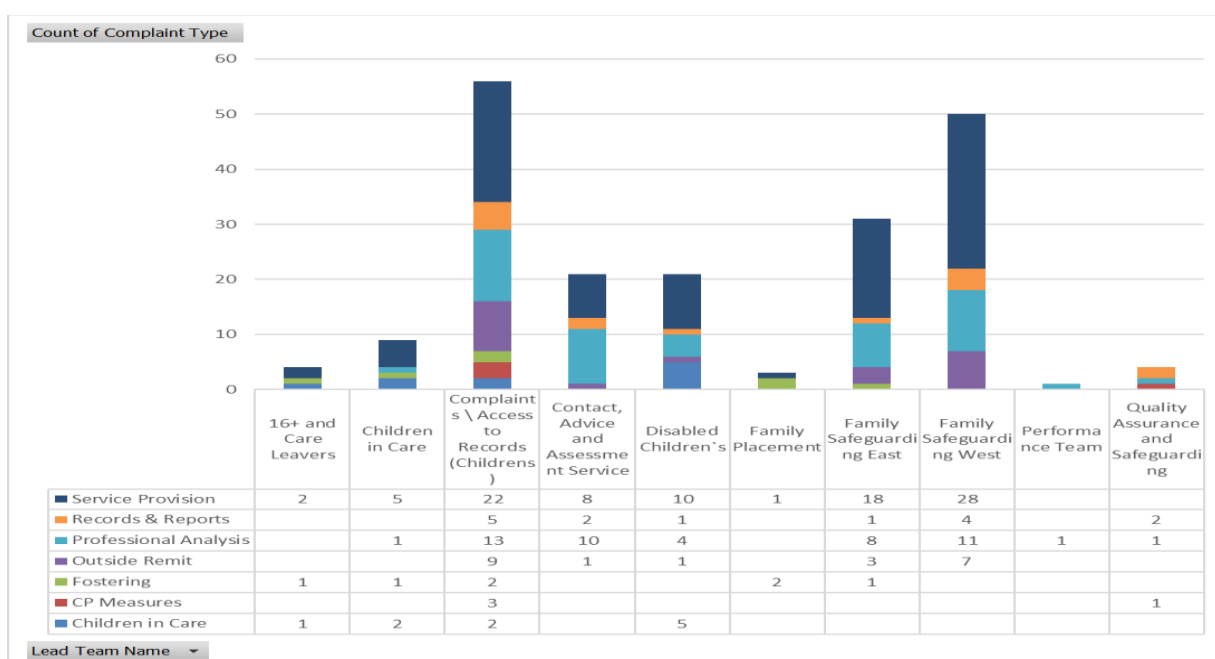


Figure 2: Volume and primary reason for complaint by team.

## 5.9. Nature of the Concern Raised

5.9.1. The table below sets out the categories used to describe complaints and the complaints processes used for investigations. As complainants can raise a number of concerns in a single statement of complaint, the number of concerns recorded exceeds that of the number of complaints received.

Table 3: Reasons Given for Raising a Complaint

Row Labels	Alternative Resolution /Restorative	Childrens	Corporate	CP Decision	Enquiry	Grand Total
Assessment		2	9		8	19
Care Planning			1		3	4
Confidentiality		1	7		1	9
Contact					6	6
Court Decision			8		8	16
CP Measures			2	1	1	4
Delay in paperwork			2		1	3
Direct Payment			1			1
Eligibility		1				1
Fostering		1	2		4	7
Lack of Support		1	5		4	10
Other Agency			2		3	5
Poor Communication			8		8	16
Professional Decision			15		5	20
Quality of Care					1	1
Recording Issues			2		4	6
Service Provision	1	4	19		21	45
Staff Attitude			6		4	10
Working relationship			4		5	9
Other	1	1	2		4	8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>200</b>

5.9.2. For the purpose of this analysis the complaints identified as arising from decisions made by the court have been removed. As shown in table 6 above this category accounts for **16 (8%)** of the complaints received during 2023/24. As the matter being complained about relates to a decision made by the court these complaints are not eligible for consideration via any of the Council's complaints processes. The number of complaints about court decisions has dropped from 35 (17%) in 2023/24. This can be accounted for by the drop in repeat complaints in relation to this issue.

5.9.3. Of the remaining categories the top **five** issues raised by complainants were;

- Service Provision-22.5%
- Professional Decisions-**10%**
- Assessment-12.5%– which includes disagreements around the accuracy of information included within reports.
- Communication–**8%**
- Staff Attitude **5%**

5.9.4. Concerns around service provision, professional decisions and staff attitude have been a notable element in the complaints received during 2023/24 and complaints investigations have highlighted the detrimental impact which staffing pressures have had on the way in which Council officers have been able to interact with the families members of children.

5.9.5. As in previous years the case recording which sits behind these figures demonstrates that complainants tend to identify differences in the way in which information is perceived as representing, poor report writing, poor professional decision making, or poor practice. Complaints of the sort are particularly prevalent where there has been an acrimonious relationship breakdown between those with Parental Responsibility which has given rise to significant differences in perspective between family members. Where this is the case it is not uncommon to receive multiple complaints from either a single complainant or from family groups.

## **6. Analysis of Repeat Complaints from Individual Complainants and Family Groups**

6.1. The number of repeat and slightly differently worded complaints received from a singular complainant or family group has dropped from **89** in 2022/23 to **29** in 2023/24. This pattern indicates a higher level of dissatisfaction with the service which has been provided.

6.2. While Children & Family Services always endeavour to work restoratively with complainants to resolve any new concerns, in line with the Council's complaints policy and expectations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman,



any complaints which are considered to have been responded to in full will not be re-entered into the complaints process.

## 7. Complaint Findings/Outcomes

7.1. **3.6%** of the complaints received in 2023/24 were upheld. This is the same percentage as in 2022/23. **4.7%** of complaints were partially upheld. **11.9% (23)** were not upheld

Volumes Received By Final Outcome	Total	%
Closed with Follow up	2	1.0%
Complaint completed - Complainant remains unhappy	8	4.1%
Court Decision	10	5.2%
Justified/ Upheld	7	3.6%
NFA - Complaint Refused	16	8.3%
NFA - Information provided	72	37.3%
NFA Information Provided	3	1.6%
No Finding	29	15.0%
Not Justified/ Upheld	23	11.9%
Not Upheld	2	1.0%
Partly Justified/ Upheld	9	4.7%
Restorative Meeting	2	1.0%
Withdrawn	10	5.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 4: Complaints Findings / Outcomes

7.2. Of the remaining complaints:

7.3. In **5.2% (10)** of cases, the complainant either withdrew their complaint or did not progress their concerns and a further **8.3%** or 16 complaints were refused as not being eligible for entry into the available complaints processes.

7.4. The most common outcome of an enquiry or complaint being raised was that the complainant was provided with additional information **37.3% (72)**. In most instances the person raising the enquiry was clear that they did not wish to raise a complaint at this stage, but that they felt that this might become necessary if their concerns were not addressed at this point. The restorative approach which has been adopted by Children & Family Services has helped to create a very open attitude towards passing concerns to the complaints department and is considered to be beneficial in helping to recognise and respond to what might otherwise be hard to identify areas of concern and learning.

7.5. In 15% (29) of complaints no finding was made. An analysis of the background data shows that in the majority of these case the outcome which was being sought by the complainant was for additional comments (provided by the complainant) to be added to the record.

7.6. In 8 (4.1%) cases where a complaint has been recorded as completed at Stage 1, the complaint advised that they were dissatisfied with the outcome, but that they did not wish to escalate the complaint further.

## 8. Complaints Progressed Beyond Stage 1 during 2022/23

8.1. Where it has not been possible to resolve a complaint via restorative practice or at Stage 1 of the complaints process complaints will be escalated to the appropriate Stage 2 process for further investigation.

8.2. In 2023/24:

- 1 complaint were escalated to Stage 2 of the Children’s Services complaints process.
- 10 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the corporate complaints process.

8.3. Complainants may also choose to approach external regulatory bodies such as; The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), Social Work England (SWE) and Ofsted. It is for these bodies to determine if the complaints which are presented to them meet their criteria for investigation.

Family	Stage 2/ Overseeing Body	Outcome
Family 1		
-	Stage 2	On-Going
-	LGSCO	Upheld
-	Pre Action Judicial Review Letter	This is not considered to be the appropriate route of recourse
-	Pre Action Judicial Review Letter	As above
-	LGSCO	Upheld
Family 2		
-	Stage 2	Withdrawn
Family 3		
-	Stage 2	Resolved – Restorative Meeting
Family 4		
-	Stage 2	Not Upheld
Family 5		
-	Stage 2	Not Upheld
	LGSCO	On-Going
Family 6		
-	Stage 2	On-going
	MP	Response Provided
Family 7		
	Stage 2	Not Upheld
Family 8-		
	Stage 2	
Family 9		

	Stage 2	Closed with follow up
Family 10		
	Stage 2	Not Upheld
Family 11		
	LGSCO	Refused
Family 12		
	LGSCO	Not Upheld

*Table 5: Escalations 2023/2024*

## **9. Learning: What Have We Done Differently?**

9.1 We have reminded all officers of the importance of fully considering parental choice around educational settings for those children who have an EHCP.

9.2 We have reminded officers of the importance and expectation of showing their ID when requested to do so.

9.3 We have reminded all officers of the importance of making use of blank template documents rather than overwriting previous plans.

9.4 We have reminded all officers of the importance of timeliness in responded to complaints to ensure complaints voices are heard and responded to appropriately.

9.5 The complaints process continues to highlight hard to identify issues and where there are differences in expectation between families and professionals and Children and Family Services. The feedback received from the complaints process has enabled us to continue to develop the 'What to Expect' information series for families.

9.6 These information leaflets directly respond to the areas of learning identified from complaints and are intended to improve communication between Children & Families Service and family members. This information continues to be designed in partnership with families, to ensure that the information provided is useful, clear, transparent and accessible. The most recent addition to this series is the 'What to Expect' - Young Carers leaflet.

## **10. Summary**

10.1 During the financial year 2023/24 Children & Family Services have seen a high number of complaints which are presented once, however, a decrease in the number of complaints which are the same or similar being presented repeatedly. This demonstrates that we are learning from complaints and ensure continues learning and reviewing of practice.

10.2. The high number of single complaints, combined with the high level of staff churn in a number of the social work teams, has had a direct impact on the ability of the service to respond to complaints within the initial 10 working day timescale.

10.3. The overall number of complaints responded to within 20 working days has dropped slightly to 86%. A high number of the complaints received have included concerns which can be directly attributed to staffing issues.

## 11. Compliments

*'I was dreading social services involvement, but she was lovely, she listened to us, really helped us and made some positive changes for us'*

(Parent)

*'Thank you for being so honest and real in the group'*

(Parent)

*'I just wanted to write to say a very big thank you for all you have done for us. You don't have an easy job and don't always get the thanks you deserve. Thanks for being so quick to respond to any crisis we have experienced'*

(Parent)

*'I wouldn't change anything'*

(Parent)

*'I just want to thank you for being my support, I felt like in the short t you which is a massive thing for me...You're visits never made me feel nervous or judged I was always comfortable'*

(Parent)

*'I cannot shout enough about how much [our social worker] helped our family. [Our Social Worker] saved our family.'*

(Parent)

*'Please could you pass on to K and the whole team my thanks for all the support I have received during my years fostering with West Berks. I have always felt 100% supported and it really has been a wonderful experience.'*

(Foster Carer)

*'The residents of West Berkshire are lucky to have such a great group of professionals working in their best interest. Thank you for your support and hard work'*

(TVP)

## **12. Actions for 2024-2025**

- 12.1. Continue to learn from complaints and Principal Social Worker to consider how learning can be improved and disseminated.
- 12.2. Consider producing quarterly learning briefs to capture themes and actions to improve practice.
- 12.3. Review and improve how family feedback is gathered more regularly, so we are learning continuously and not just when families complain.
- 12.4. Improve timeliness of complaint responses.

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# SEND High Needs Block & Delivering Better Value

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Scrutiny Commission
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	24 September 2024
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Heather Codling
<b>Report Author:</b>	Susan Tanner, Service Director Delivering Better Value. Neil Goddard, Service Director Education & SEND

## 1. Purpose of the Report

This report provides information on the High Needs Block (HNB) deficit and outlines the work that is being undertaken through the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme and beyond. It covers:

- The nature and the scale of the HNB challenge.
- The trajectory of overspend that has been unmitigated over time.
- The work that is being undertaken during 2024/25 to address HNB spend and wider activity through the DBV programme.
- How this work will continue post 2024/25.

## 2. Recommendation

To note and comment on the contents of this report and the varied appendices.

## 3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	The current (September 2024) unmitigated prediction for HNB spend is £40,895,301 against a budget of £29,488,313 (including Schools Block transfer). Combined with the existing deficit from previous years of £9,528,516, this gives a potential cumulative deficit of £20,939,248 at the end of 2024-25. Initial projections show this continuing to increase in coming years,

	<p>potentially reaching £65m at the end of the 2028-29 financial year.</p> <p>The DBV programme is supported by a grant of £1m, paid in four quarters from April 2024.</p>			
<b>Human Resource:</b>	<p>The DBV grant has enable West Berkshire to bring in additional resource for a fixed period of up to one year. These posts are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DBV Service Director</li> <li>• DBV Programme Manager</li> <li>• DBV Participation and Engagement Officer</li> <li>• DBV Data Analyst.</li> </ul>			
<b>Legal:</b>	Not required at this time.			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>There is significant financial risk to the council as the existing condition that permits a statutory override on balances relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant is due to expire on 31/03/26 thus transferring the forecast deficit on High Needs Block to the council balance sheet.</p>			
<b>Property:</b>	N/A			
<b>Policy:</b>	N/A			
	<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		



<p><b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?</p>		X		
<p><b>Environmental Impact:</b></p>		X		
<p><b>Health Impact:</b></p>		X		
<p><b>ICT Impact:</b></p>		X		
<p><b>Digital Services Impact:</b></p>		X		
<p><b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b></p>		X		
<p><b>Core Business:</b></p>		X		<p>The DBV Programme is a transformational project, which is expected to have an impact on the delivery of core business.</p>
<p><b>Data Impact:</b></p>		X		
<p><b>Consultation and Engagement:</b></p>	<p>Key system partners are members of the <b>SEND Strategic Improvement Board</b> and Implementation/ Task groups.</p> <p>School representation on Task Groups provide operational input and regular updates are provided to Schools' Forum and the Heads Funding Group.</p> <p>The Parent Carer Forum is re-established and a representative sits on the <b>SEND Strategic Improvement Board</b> and DBV Task Group and is supported by the Participation and Engagement Manager and Strategy Officer.</p> <p>West Berkshire has sought to work with children, families, and Local Area partners throughout the DBV Programme. It is important to note that the Parent Carer Forum and Youth Forum have recently been reformed and are in the early stages of activity.</p>			

	A Communications Plan has been launched to support the delivery of the DBV Programme and ensure wider engagement with all sectors of the community.
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## 4. Executive Summary

This report draws together information on the High Needs Block and the work that is being undertaken, through the DfE Delivering Better Value initiative. Future activity is captured in the 'Innovation is SEND' delivery plan which is aligned to the West Berkshire's SEND strategy.

## 5. Supporting Information

### High Needs Block (HNB)

- 5.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced fund that finances expenditure on schools, early years and supporting children and young people with additional needs. It is made up of four elements:
- Schools Block (SB)
  - Early Years Block (EB)
  - Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)
  - High Needs Block (HNB)
- 5.2 Should a Local Authority finish the financial year with an overspend or underspend in the DSG, this is carried forward and offset against future allocations.
- 5.3 Further detailed information on the High Needs Block can be found in the briefing at Appendix 1 of this paper.
- 5.4 There is a High Needs Block Deficit Management Plan, produced for the DfE, that can be found at Appendix 1a of this paper.

## 6. Delivering Better Value Programme (DBV)

- 6.1 West Berkshire is one of 55 local authorities that are part of DBV. The aim of the programme is to support local authorities and their local area partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability.
- 6.2 Further detailed information on the work of the DBV programme can be found in the Corporate Board update for September 2024 at Appendix 2 of this paper.

## 7. SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-29

71. The SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-29 sets out the priorities WBC will be focussing on over the next five years. This is attached at Appendix 3.

- 7.2 There is a robust delivery plan – covering the work set out in the SEND and Inclusion Strategy incorporating the work required through the DBV Programme (this combined work is referred to as Innovation in SEND). This plan sets out the actions we will take, when we will take them and the improvements we expect to see as a result. This is attached at Appendix 4 of this paper.
- 7.3 The Delivery Plan for Innovation in SEND is intended to be a dynamic document and will continue to be updated each year, with new actions and timescales. It will be the vehicle through which we continue to manage and mitigate the pressures on the HNB.

## 8. Other options considered

The Council was required to engage in the Delivering Better Value Programme. It is not an option for WBC to fail to address the HNB deficit recovery given the consequences relating to the removal of the statutory over-ride

## 9. Appendices

- HNB Briefing – Appendix 1
- HNB Deficit Management Plan – Appendix 1a
- DBV Progress Report 3 Corporate Board September 2024 – Appendix 2
- WBC SEND and Inclusion Strategy – Appendix 3
- Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan – Appendix 4

## West Berkshire High Needs Block Pressures

### Dedicated Schools Grant

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ringfenced Department for Education (DfE) grant that funds local authorities for their expenditure on schools, early years and supporting children and young people with additional needs.

The DSG is made up of four elements as follows (2024/25 West Berkshire allocation for each element shown in brackets):

- Schools Block (SB) – Funding that is passed directly to schools based on a nationally mandated formula. Maintained schools funding comes to the local authority to distribute, academies funding is top sliced by DfE and distributed centrally (£134.019m)
- Early Years Block (EYB) – Funding for Early Years settings and providers, local authorities can retain a maximum of 5% for early years support services (£17.977m)
- Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) – Funding for LAs to conduct central functions on behalf of pupils in state-funded maintained schools and academies, for example school admissions (£0.961m)
- High Needs Block (HNB) - Funding to support provision for pupils and students with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) who require additional resources to participate in education and learning (£29.081m)

Should a Local Authority finish the financial year with an overspend or underspend in the DSG, this is carried forward and offset against future allocations.

### High Needs Block Pressures

In recent years, many local authorities have found that the funding provided through the HNB element of the DSG is insufficient to meet the assessed needs of children and young people in their areas. As a result, over half of all local authorities are reporting a deficit in their HNB, and the total deficit held by local authorities is projected to be more than £3.6bn by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

There are many contributory factors that have led to this pressure, these include:

- Level of Needs - The rate of increase in identified need is significantly higher than the increase in budgets made available to local authorities across the country.

- Complexity of Need - The complexity of high needs services demanded by more and more children and their parents has increased significantly in recent years.
- Supply of Places - The provision of places that can meet the needs of increasingly complex cases is insufficient, with investment in the creation of new places not keeping pace with demand.
- Increased use of Independent Provision – Due to the insufficiency in the number high needs places, local authorities are having to make increasing use of costly independent providers
- Post-16 Extension to 25 – National policy changes expanded the age range of pupils with SEND who must be supported from 18 to 25. The funding identified to support this change has proven to be insufficient.
- Impact on Exclusions – More children, both primary and secondary, are being excluded from school due to behavioural issues. There is an inconsistent approach to inclusion across schools and academies, with a small numbers of schools accounting for high numbers of exclusions.
- Mental Health and links to Health Service – The Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP) that sets out a pupil needs, should be jointly owned by education, social care, and health services. Due to the level of budget and other pressures in the NHS, services such and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are unable to keep up with demand. Local authorities have also struggled to secure contributions from health services towards meeting needs.

## **Government Response**

The previous Government recognised the pressures that local authorities faced in relation to the HNB, and put in place a number of interim measures that offer support:

- Statutory Override - The Local Authorities Capital Finance and Accounting (England) Regulations that became law at the end of November 2020, allowed councils to hold the accumulated HNB deficit in a negative reserve that is disregarded in terms of financial sustainability.

These arrangements were put in place initially for a period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, however, in December 2022 these were extended for a further one-off period of three years up to 31 March 2026.

Many councils (51%) are now in a position where, if the statutory override were removed, and the HNB deficit returned to their balance sheet, they

would immediately become insolvent.

- Delivering Better Value (DBV) – DBV aims to help local councils and partners improve their support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and to ensure these are sustainable.

The programme does this by:

- identifying changes that will make the biggest difference in getting better outcomes
  - supporting the council to use their resources in the most efficient way
  - providing limited additional grant funding to support this work
  - regular monitoring of progress by DfE to assess impact.
- Safety Valve Agreements (SVA) – SVA are used in areas where the HNB deficit has grown to an unsustainable level. These formal agreements are made between DfE and the council, with DfE providing additional funding on the basis that the council take immediate actions to reduce future costs.

The scope and scale of the actions required has come under scrutiny due to the impact these could have on local schools and the medium to longer term impact these may have on services.

A number of SVA have been suspended as the actions that have been taken have either not delivered the level of savings anticipated or have been undeliverable due to the wider impact on the system.

The new Government is yet to make a formal comment on how it intends to address the ongoing pressures in the HNB. It is anticipated that any proposals will be included in the Autumn 2024 budget statement.

### **West Berkshire Position**

West Berkshire ended the 2023/24 financial year with an accumulated HNB deficit of £9.5m.

A further deficit of £5.5m is projected for the financial year 2024/25, increasing the accumulated deficit to £15m.

Initial projections show this continuing to increase in coming years, potentially reaching £65m at the end of 2028/29 financial year.

The pressures that have led to this position are very much in line with the national issues highlighted above. These include an increase in the number of pupils requiring support, an increase in the complexity of the needs being identified and insufficient specialist-maintained places to accommodate all pupils requiring support.

The number of children with an EHCP has increased by almost 50% since 2020, from 1032 to 1538. Over the same period, the number permanent exclusions schools made annually have almost tripled. However, funding through the HNB has increased by just 34%.

West Berkshire is fortunate to have high quality local provision to meet the needs of pupils with SEND in the form of two outstanding maintained special schools and a high quality, innovative maintained Alternative Provision (AP) provider. There are also ten resourced units attached to mainstream schools providing specialist placements. However, despite increases in capacity in recent years, all these places are currently full.

Many schools are inclusive and collaborate effectively with the local authority to ensure the needs of all children are met. However, a small number of schools are generating a disproportionate number of exclusions, with one secondary academy accounting for almost half of all permanent exclusions

The provision for pupils not in a formal school place is limited, too many pupils are not receiving a full-time education and are waiting too long for a suitable place to become available.

Services have been developed to support schools to be inclusive and meet higher levels of need without requiring additional support. However, these have come under pressure due to staffing shortages, most notably a reduction in Educational Psychology capacity from 11FTE to 1.6FTE. More broadly, the increased pressure on services has not been reflected in increased capacity and so work is having to be prioritised, with some services paused or ceased.

There is currently limited specialist commissioning capacity available to support SEND services. This has a significant impact on the council's ability to plan effectively and engage with the market, leading to increased costs and further lack of sufficiency.

A permanent senior staffing structure has now been implemented, and a full review of structures and capacity is being undertaken with an expectation of a full implementation in April 2025.

Beyond this, a range of actions are being taken to address the current pressures, these include:

- Further targeted investment to increase local SEND place numbers in both mainstream and specialist settings, through effective sufficiency planning.
- Review of pupil funding banding arrangements
- Maintained investment in services to support inclusive approaches in schools

- Increased scrutiny of placement decisions to ensure value for money
- Scrutiny of health contributions to placement costs
- Increased challenge to schools where exclusions could be avoided, and the provision of mental health support to all schools to support them in avoiding exclusions

The council has also entered the DfE DBV scheme. This has provided resource to review current practices and the outcomes that are delivered, to identify ways in which resources could be deployed more effectively. The areas of focus of DBV include:

- Development and implementation of a SEND and Inclusion Strategy
- Development of a detailed SEND sufficiency Strategy
- Increase in participation and co-production activity, including a co-production charter
- Definition and design of an effective commissioning function for SEND
- A banding review
- Transitions support (to prevent need for EHCPs at key education transitions)
- Mental Health support for schools
- High-cost Placements Review and a resetting of the process and systems in place to oversee such placements.
- A detailed review of the services and support available to children and families below statutory levels, to enhance support and reduce requests for statutory assessment. This includes services and support provided by health services and other partnership agencies.



## HNB Deficit Management Plan

**High needs recoupment place figures**

All the below relate to the SEN/special schools column only

**Resourced provision or SEN units placements**

		outturn data	outturn data	outturn data
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1.0.2	1.0.2 High needs place funding within Individual Schools Budget (Primary)	£101,783	£108,092	£111,750
1.0.2	1.0.2 High needs place funding within Individual Schools Budget (Secondary)	£631,052	£672,575	£707,750
1.0.2	1.0.2 High needs place funding within Individual Schools Budget (Early years)	£0	£0	£0
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>£732,834</b>	<b>£780,667</b>	<b>£819,500</b>

**Maintained special schools or special academies placements**

		outturn data	outturn data	outturn data
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1.0.2	1.0.2 High needs place funding within Individual Schools Budget	£0	£0	£0
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>

**Hospital schools or alternative provision (AP) placements**

		outturn data	outturn data	outturn data
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1.0.2	1.0.2 High needs place funding within Individual Schools Budget (AP/PRUs)	£0	£0	£0
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>

**Post-16 and further education (FE) placements**

Please note, this is not included in line 1.0.2 but the recoupment amount is in 1.10.2 recoupment figure

		outturn data	outturn data	outturn data
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1.10.2	High needs place funding within Individual Schools Budget (Post-16 and FE)	£810,000	£798,000	£782,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>£810,000</b>	<b>£798,000</b>	<b>£782,000</b>

**Total High Needs Recoupment**

		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>£1,542,834</b>	<b>£1,578,667</b>	<b>£1,601,500</b>

DBV Progress Report 3 Corporate Board September 2024

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# Delivering Better Value Programme Update

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Corporate Board
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	10/09/2024
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Heather Codling
<b>Date Head of Service agreed report:</b> <i>(for Corporate Board)</i>	AnnMarie Dodds 03/09/24
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	03/09/24
<b>Report Author:</b>	Susan Tanner, Service Director DBV Hester Collicutt, DBV Programme Manager
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report is to provide the **third** update on the Delivering Better Value Programme (DBV) and its impact on the SEND system in West Berkshire to Corporate Board.

1.2 The report is updated regularly so that the Board is informed of progress in the delivery of the programme and its impact in improving outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities and the programme's contribution to successfully reducing the High Needs Block deficit by transforming the delivery of SEND support in West Berkshire.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 It is recommended that Corporate Board notes the progress made.

### 3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary																	
<p><b>Financial:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DBV Programme is supported by a grant of £1 million paid in 4 quarters, from April 2024.</li> <li>• Each DBV grant payment is subject to a detailed quarterly report being submitted to the DfE measuring progress against key milestones.</li> <li>• West Berkshire has received the first two quarters of funding – Quarter 1 - £262,499  <div style="text-align: center;">Quarter 2 - £262,499</div> </li> </ul> <p><b>DBV Projected Savings: Jan 2024</b></p> <p>The figures below come from the <b>DSG Management Plan 2023-2024</b>, submitted to the DfE on 19 Feb 2024 and signed off by Section 151 Officer, Joseph Holmes. They show the anticipated cost savings between 2025-2028. (N.B. DBV cost savings are not accounted for in the year 2024-2025 as this will allow time for programme implementation and evaluation).</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="604 1218 1489 1684"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="604 1218 820 1442" rowspan="2">Description of DBV Diagnostic initiatives*</th> <th data-bbox="826 1218 1027 1442" rowspan="2">What it involves</th> <th colspan="3" data-bbox="1034 1218 1489 1344">Potential in-year financial impact (£'000s)</th> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="1034 1352 1179 1442">2025-6</th> <th data-bbox="1185 1352 1331 1442">2026-7</th> <th data-bbox="1337 1352 1489 1442">2027-8</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="604 1451 820 1684"> <p><b>1.GAP analysis to inform Local Provision /Need</b></p> </td> <td data-bbox="826 1451 1027 1684"> <p>Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child can be achieved without the need for an EHCP.</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1034 1451 1179 1684" style="text-align: center;">-£72,000</td> <td data-bbox="1185 1451 1331 1684" style="text-align: center;">-£123,000</td> <td data-bbox="1337 1451 1489 1684" style="text-align: center;">-£123,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Description of DBV Diagnostic initiatives*	What it involves	Potential in-year financial impact (£'000s)			2025-6	2026-7	2027-8	<p><b>1.GAP analysis to inform Local Provision /Need</b></p>	<p>Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child can be achieved without the need for an EHCP.</p>	-£72,000	-£123,000	-£123,000
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	<b>2 Ensuring Sufficiency</b>	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in INMSS at a more effective average unit cost	-£54,000	-£93,000	-£93,000
			-£21,000	-£37,000	-£37,000
		Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child through Alternative Provision rather than INMSS			
	<b>3 Financial Sustainability</b>	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in MSS at a more effective average unit cost	-£311,000	-£533,000	-£533,000
	<b>4 Supporting Inclusive Practice</b>	Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in a Mainstream setting rather than MSS	-£214,000	-£367,000	-£367,000
		Supporting the goals and aspirations of the child in a Mainstream setting rather than INMSS	-£292,000	-£500,000	-£500,000
		<b>Potential in-year financial impact (£'000s)</b>	<b>Potential in-year financial impact (£'000s)</b>	<b>Potential in-year financial impact (£'000s)</b>	

		2025-6	2026-7	2027-8
	TOTAL	-£964,000	£1,653,000	£1,653,000
	<p><b>The revised DSG plan (July 2024)</b> indicates that there are two key updates since February:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 23-24 outturn figures confirmed</li> <li>2) 24-25 budget confirmed</li> </ol> <p>The DBV team reviewed the clawback request presented to the Schools Forum in December 2023 and recommended that this be re-considered by the Schools Forum meeting in June 2024. Balances over 10% have been agreed (subject to scrutiny by finance/audit/education) to be clawed back from schools, excluding current commitments. The value of this is to be confirmed but will be added to the deficit management template once confirmed.</p> <p>However, the estimated mitigated deficit by the end of <b>27-28</b> has increased from £61.4m to <b>£65.9m</b>.</p>			
<b>Human Resource:</b>	<p>The DBV Programme is delivered by staff under contract for up to 1 year, funded by the DBV grant. All HR resourcing is supported by Rebecca Hopkins, Talent Attraction Business Partner, and reviewed by Lisa Potts, Finance Manager.</p> <p>Fixed term interim staff in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DBV Service Director</li> <li>• DBV Programme Manager</li> <li>• DBV Commissioning Consultant</li> <li>• DBV Data Analyst</li> <li>• DBV Participation and Engagement officer</li> </ul> <p>All these roles were identified in the bid submission and are key for the successful delivery of the project.</p> <p>DBV spend on HR is reviewed quarterly by Finance and the DfE to ensure costings remain within budget.</p>			

<b>Legal:</b>	This is not required at this time.			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	Please see section 5.5-5.10			
<b>Property:</b>	Not applicable			
<b>Policy:</b>	<p>The DBV Programme is a national policy, involving 55 Local Authorities. The aim of the programme is to support local authorities and their local area partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability.</p> <p>The DBV Programme is a core element of the overall <b>SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029</b> in West Berkshire.</p> <p>It focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing statutory spend through early identification of need and targeted intervention whilst at SEND support.</li> <li>• Reducing the requirement for EHC assessments as presenting needs will be better addressed in a timely way.</li> <li>• Developing increased capacity in specialist-maintained school provision and alternative provision thereby reducing the need to place CYP in Independent non maintained special schools with the associated high unit cost of placement.</li> </ul>			
	<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			The DBV Programme is required to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

<p><b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?</p>	<p>X</p>			<p>The purpose of the DBV Programme is improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND by improving timely access to services, interventions, and appropriate levels of funding.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Impact:</b></p>		<p>x</p>		<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Health Impact:</b></p>	<p>x</p>			<p>Health, are involved in co-commissioning activities, including contributions to high-cost placements. The Chief Nursing Officer- Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, ICB Director for Berkshire West Place, and the Designated Clinical Officer are members of the <b>SEND Strategic Improvement Board</b>.</p>
<p><b>ICT Impact:</b></p>		<p>x</p>		<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Digital Services Impact:</b></p>	<p>x</p>			<p>Digital services are being reviewed and systems updated as part of the DBV Programme e.g. Refreshing of Local Offer and SEND data management systems</p>

<p><b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b></p>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority: 1. Services We Are Proud of – goals and key milestones/initiatives             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1.1. Good quality public services for all (compared to similar local authorities in England) – <i>ensuring SEND statutory services continue to be delivered effectively - positive.</i></li> <li>- 1.5. Strong budgetary control, use of resources and initiatives to maximise financial efficiency -<i>close accountability of High Needs Block and management of Deficit Management Plan - positive</i></li> <li>- 15.1. Always aiming for investments that save money / generate revenue and provide a benefit to our community – <i>Capacity development in Local provision – positive impact.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Priority: 2.A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2.5.1. Prioritise funding to reduce wait times for children’s mental health services - <i>Targeted support on all schools to support Mental Health – positive impact.</i></li> <li>- 2.5.2. Conduct a full review of Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities (SEND) capacity and model in West Berkshire - <i>Development of Sufficiency Strategy – positive impact.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Core Business:</b></p>				<p>The DBV Programme is a transformational project, which is expected to have an impact on core business.</p>



<b>Data Impact:</b>				The programme includes significant activity to create a SEND data dashboard which facilitate better oversight of performance.
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>Key system partners are members of the <b>SEND Strategic Improvement Board</b> and Implementation/ Task groups.</p> <p>School representation on Task Groups provide operational input and regular updates are provided to Schools' Forum and the Heads Funding Group.</p> <p>The Parent Carer Forum is re-established and a representative sits on the <b>SEND Strategic Improvement Board</b> and DBV Task Group and is supported by the Participation and Engagement Manager and Strategy Officer.</p> <p>West Berkshire has sought to work with children, families, and Local Area partners throughout the DBV Programme. It is important to note that the Parent Carer Forum and Youth Forum have recently been reformed and are in the early stages of activity.</p> <p>A Communications Plan has been launched to support the delivery of the DBV Programme and ensure wider engagement with all sectors of the community.</p>			

## 4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 The DBV Programme is beginning to have an impact on the outcomes for children and young people with SEND (in the longer term this will impact the overarching Deficit Management Plan to reduce spend of the High Needs Block) ensuring a sustainable service delivery for SEND provision in West Berkshire.
- 4.2 This is a transformation programme that will support systems reviews of SEND activities and ensure that SEND Commissioning is effective in meeting the current and future demands of the local population, and in doing so, improve long term outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The DBV programme provides the first year's focus of activities to address the six propriety areas of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, "**Innovation in SEND**", which will be delivered between 2024 – 2029.
- 4.3 This paper highlights progress being made towards this, and in addition, the current risks to delivery and the mitigations in place.

- 4.4 The current risks and mitigations are identified in section 5.5 to 5.10. If there is a delay in implementation of the DBV Programme, then there will be an impact on the High Need Block Deficit Management Plan.

## 5. Supporting Information

### 5.1 Introduction

This report outlines the progress of the DBV Programme since confirmation of funding from the Department for Education (DfE) in April 2024.

### 5.2 Background/Progress to date

Since April the DBV Programme and its governance has become fully aligned and incorporated into the new SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2029 to ensure the overarching delivery of the “Innovation in SEND” programme in West Berkshire

West Berkshire is required to provide formal quarterly progress update to the DfE. The quarterly reporting cycle to the DfE is as follows: -

- **April to June by 5th July – submitted and approved by the DfE.**
- July to Sept by 4th October
- October to December by 10th January
- January to March by 4th April

The four working Groups of the DBV Programme meet monthly during term time and tasks have been instigated according to the DBV Programme Plan and incorporated into the SEND and Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan 2024-2029.

- a) The Parent and Carer Forum is engaged at a strategic level, sitting on the **SEND Strategic Improvement Board (SSIB)** which is chaired by the Executive Director of Children’s Services, and whose membership includes the Chief Executive for West Berkshire, the Lead Member for Children’s Services and Education, Chief Nursing Officer for the ICB and the ICB Place Director (Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire -BOB).
- b) To further support communication with parents and carers, West Berkshire has invested in the **Coram Parent Champion Programme**. The Parent Champion programme extends our ability to engage with parents and carers during the remaining months of the DBV programme supporting the Gap Analysis /SEND Local Offer and the Inclusive Practice workstreams.
- c) A **SEND Strategic Communications Plan** has now been adopted. It encompasses both work under the DBV Programme and the wider SEND and Inclusion Strategy under the collective strapline: “**Innovation in SEND**”. The draft Communications Plan includes an ‘[Innovation in SEND](#)’ blog / web page where we host all updates on DBV.

- d) DBV working groups meet monthly in term time to scrutinise the delivery of the programme and regular reports are submitted to Schools Forum and Heads Funding Group.
- e) Key temporary posts have been filled to manage the delivery of the programme, increasing the capacity of the existing teams whilst system changes are implemented. However, some recruitment has been more difficult and has caused delay e.g. the “**Whole School Mental Health Project**” where the project has been delayed by 5-6 months. The DfE has agreed DBV grant funding can be used beyond 31 March 2025 until July 2025 on delayed projects.
- f) The “**Whole School Mental Health Project**” has been redesigned as it was reliant on Educational Psychologists (EPs) to deliver the programme. Due to retention challenges Educational Psychology time is limited and must be prioritised in other areas. A revised, evidenced based programme has been commissioned from an external provider. The delivery of the programme will be led by the Virtual School Team and will work closely with 10 schools to develop a pilot. The pilot, if successful, can be expanded and will complement the current provision available for schools.

The programme is designed to meet West Berkshire’s aims to:

- Develop the capacity of schools to support children and young people through whole school and targeted approaches to emotional well-being.
- Improve outcomes for all children in mainstream schools and particularly the most vulnerable
- Reduce permanent exclusion and suspension
- Increase attendance
- Reduce the need for alternative provision and use of out of area high cost placements

In addition, all mainstream schools will have access to an online learning platform to support Mental Health identification and good practice.

- g) The **Transitions Support Programme** Summer Term 2024 supported Early Years transition into Foundation 2, for September 2024. This will be continued into the Autumn Term 2024 to ensure vulnerable children are successfully supported into their mainstream placement. It is expected that it will build the confidence of receiving schools in their ability to meet need. An **Early Years Transitions Guidance** into mainstream schools will be published in the Autumn.
- h) The Key Stage 2/3 Transitions Programme has been co-produced with schools (Primary and Secondary SENCOs and Year 7 teachers). A **West Berkshire Schools’ Guidance for a Successful Primary to Secondary Transition** will be published in October 2024. This is a good practice guide for schools to adopt when supporting transitions for vulnerable children moving between primary and secondary mainstream.

- i) Pupil level data has been reviewed to enable the identification of mainstream Year 6 pupils most likely to require additional support at transition. Targeted interventions will be available for these children to ensure as many as possible successfully transition into their secondary mainstream school.
- j) The first months of the DBV Programme have focused on ensuring systems are in place to drive sustainable, evidenced based improvements in supporting children and young people with SEND, delivering cost effective solutions that meet SEND needs locally and that are co-produced with local partners and families. Work on SEND Data Management has informed the development of a **Sufficiency Plan, data dashboards** and a clearer financial overview of placements in Independent non-maintained special schools (INMSS). This is bringing together teams from within the Council to align their work and is informing sufficiency, financial scrutiny, and commissioning developments. This will be an area of focus over the coming months.
- k) Phase 1 of a SEND funding review focussing on levels of funding available for children and young with SEND was completed at the end of August 2024 (a paper on this will come to a future Corporate Board). This was a desk top exercise to understand and benchmark current practices. Phase 2 will commence in September and will establish a working group of school leaders and Local Authority officers to co-develop a revised funding system. The working group will develop:
- a shared understanding of the range and levels of needs across West Berkshire settings and schools and how that compares with other areas
  - a clear and consistent graduated approach to meeting needs across the local area
  - a transparent and equitable system of SEND funding and resource allocation across West Berkshire
  - identification and development of changes to the current SEND system
  - improvement in the quality and clarity of EHCPs
  - evidencing the impact of resourcing on children and young people's outcomes
- l) A review of statutory decision-making processes has been undertaken to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Any changes in process will be managed through consultation and updated on the local offer. A High-Cost Placement Review has been undertaken and is informing work around joint decision making in relation to Social Care, Education and Health Placements.
- m) A cross-agency gap analysis has been completed in relation to the Universal and Targeted Offer in West Berkshire in conjunction with health colleagues – e.g. review of the support available around Autism, pre and post diagnosis. “A plan on a page” for available services will be published on the Local Offer.

This is in response to issues raised by parents and practitioners regarding clarity of support available and referral pathways published on the Local Offer. Gaps in offers are being identified and will be commissioned or co-commissioned as necessary. The Local Offer will be updated to reflect these developments. However the changing of the Local Offer platform and the limited resourcing of Local Offer administration may delay this.

- n) An audit of schools' training needs has been undertaken and an evaluation of current LA support services is being completed to ensure evidence-based impact can be demonstrated.

## **Next Steps**

The Sufficiency Plan will be finalised and will inform SEND school place capacity development. This is a priority as it will reduce the need to place children and young people in Independent Non-Maintained high-cost placements. Capital bids have been submitted for 2025 – 2035 and a request has been made to ensure flexible funding is secured for future capital development to meet SEND requirements over the next 10 years.

Through a review of SEND systems, it is evident that there is reduced capacity in the SEND Team to undertake timely Annual Reviews or prioritise Annual Reviews at points of transfer. A previous council request to fund this activity was declined. The absence of annual reviews does not meet statutory requirements and directly impacts on children's and young people's outcomes, placement requests, tribunal outcomes and demand for high-cost Independent non-maintained placements. A business case will be submitted for additional resources to support the business-as-usual processing of Annual Reviews.

The Local Offer needs updating and ongoing monitoring to ensure that it continues to meet service user requirements. Current resourcing is not adequate to address this in a timely fashion. It is hoped that DBV grant can be used to provide some additional resource in the interim, whilst as assessment is made of the longer-term requirement for additional resource.

## **Challenges**

Co-production is at the centre of this programme; however, the Parent Carer Forum consists of very few parents and therefore continues to have very limited capacity to engage with the DBV programme. However, through the work with Coram Parent Champion Programme, a wider group of parents and carers is being engaged.

Relationships with some schools have been more challenging whilst the "claw back" process for excess balances is being reviewed. restoring these relationships will be a priority for officers in Autumn 2024 to ensure schools feel supported whilst undergoing Part 2 of the Banding Review. This will be co-produced with school heads and senior management, which will support understanding and engagement as we move forward with the process.

Significant staff changes in the SEND Team have added additional capacity pressures in the service. A restructure is scheduled and there are arrangements in place to ensure limited disruption in line management etc. whilst the review is being undertaken.

## **6. Other options considered.**

No other options are currently being considered at this time.

## **7. Conclusion**

The DBV Programme is proceeding at pace and is broadly in line with the delivery schedule, but the anticipated risks will impact on delivery time and the Programme may run beyond March 2025 in certain areas, with DfE agreement.

## **8. Appendices**

None

**SEND & Inclusion Strategy**

# West Berkshire Council SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 Innovation in SEND



Children with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.





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## Foreword

It is our privilege to introduce West Berkshire's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and Inclusion Strategy. This document represents a commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and equitable environment for all children and young people in our community. It is grounded in our belief that every child, regardless of their abilities or needs, deserves access to high-quality education and support affording them the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Over the past year, we have engaged in extensive consultations with families, educators, healthcare professionals, and community organisations. Their insights have been invaluable, and we are grateful for the time and passion they have invested in shaping this strategy. It is through these collaborative efforts that we can truly understand and address the diverse needs of our children.

The strategy outlines a clear vision: to create an inclusive landscape where barriers to success are removed, and all children feel valued and supported. It is not just about meeting statutory obligations; it is about embracing a culture of inclusion that permeates every aspect of our support and education system. This means ensuring that our schools are equipped with the resources, training, and support necessary to provide tailored educational experiences. It also means fostering a community where differences are celebrated, and every child's contribution is recognised.

Our approach is underpinned by a set of core principles: collaboration, early intervention, person-centred planning, supporting children close to where they live and maximising independence. By working together across all sectors, we can identify and respond to needs more effectively, ensuring that children receive the right support at the right time. Early intervention is crucial in preventing difficulties from escalating and helping children achieve better long-term outcomes.

This strategy builds on the priorities of West Berkshire in its Council Strategy 2023-27;

- Services we are proud of
- A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all
- Tackling climate and ecological emergency
- A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire
- Thriving communities with strong local voice.

We are confident that this strategy accompanied by its delivery plan will serve as a robust framework for enhancing the experiences of children with SEND. It is a living document, designed to evolve as we learn and grow together. We urge all stakeholders to engage with it actively and work in unison to bring our vision to life.

Thank you for your dedication to this vital work.



*Cllr. Heather Codling*

*Portfolio Holder – Children, Education and Young People's Services*



*AnnMarie Dodds*

*Executive Director (People - Children's Services)*



## What the Council and Local Area must do for children and young people with SEND

In West Berkshire, we believe that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is everyone's business, which means that everyone has a key role to play to ensure that children and young people with SEND, and their families, receive the support they need. Our vision for what we would like SEND Services to look like in West Berkshire is:

Children with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.

The SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 outlines the priorities we will be working on over the next five years and has been written in response to the information gathered as part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme (a programme run by the Department for

Education (DfE) to support Local Authorities, and their partners, to improve the delivery of SEND Services for children and young people whilst working to ensure that funding remains available to deliver these services) and the SEND Review which took place in 2023 (where we completed a review of the provision in West Berkshire, met with parents/carers, schools nurseries and voluntary providers and completed a young person's survey)

### Why do we need a SEND & Inclusion Strategy?

The Children and Families Act (2014) applied major changes to the way in which Local Authorities and their partners (e.g. education, health and care) help and support children and young people with SEND and their families.

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act (2014) outlines the legal responsibilities of Local Authorities, Education, Health and Care providers in relation to the provision of care and support for children and young people with SEND and their families, it also details the formal processes which must be followed in providing this care and support.

Under the Equality Act (2010), education providers have a legal duty to ensure they do not discriminate against children and young people with SEND; ensuring that all pupils, including those with SEND, are involved in every aspect of school life and that adjustments should be made to the way settings teach pupils to allow for this.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) is legal guidance which organisations who work with children and young people with SEND and their families must follow. It outlines core principles and provides guidance on how to work within legal frameworks to best support children and young people with SEND.

Having a SEND & Inclusion Strategy is important because it:

- Allows us to clearly see the impact our work is having on children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Clearly shows what our co-produced priorities are which supports with decision making.
- Gives direction within the local area, ensuring stakeholders are working together within the legal frameworks to deliver the identified priorities.
- It provides a focus for leaders.
- It allows us to monitor our progress against what we said we would do.

## Governance


West Berkshire's SEND & Inclusion Strategy will be delivered in partnership by the Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), health providers, schools and other voluntary and community services and will be implemented using the principles of co-production.

The Council has overall responsibility for the delivery of the strategy and progress will be monitored by the SEND Operational Partnership Board and SEND Strategic Improvement Board.

Each priority area will have a delivery group created where colleagues from education, health, care and other services will become members, agree projects and project leaders, agree timescales and success criteria so we know we have been successful.


The strategy is supported by a Delivery Plan which outlines in more detail, under each priority, the actions we will take, when we will take them and the improvements we expect to see as a result. This will be updated annually.

# Key Facts



**\*\*52%**  
rise in the total number of EHCP's in West Berkshire over the last 5 years from 1032 to 1566.


**\*\*\*17.2%** of children in West Berkshire schools have **SEND** compared to the **England average of 17.3%**



**\*\*\*4.7%** CYP in West Berkshire have an **EHCP** compared to the **England average of 4.3%**

**\*41%** of open cases in Children's Services have **SEND** (age 0-18)

**\*13.3%** of children in **Primary Schools** and **8.7%** in **Secondary Schools** have **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**



<p><b>**At SEN Support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)</b> most identified Primary Need.</li> <li>• <b>Autism &amp; SEMH</b> next most identified Primary Need.</li> </ul>	<p><b>**At EHCP:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>50%</b> have the <b>Primary Need of Autism.</b></li> <li>• <b>SEMH</b> next most identified Primary Need.</li> <li>• <b>Speech, Language &amp; Communication Needs (SLCN)</b> are increasing.</li> </ul>
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\*School Census  
\*\*as end of financial year  
\*\*\*2023 DfE Published Data

# What you told us: What we have done & what needs to improve

Throughout its development, the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 has been informed by feedback, from across the Local Area Partnership, gathered as part of the DBV programme and as part of the SEND Review which took place in 2023. Feedback was gathered in several ways including:

- Case Review Sessions.
- Listening Forums.
- Coffee Mornings.
- SEND Advice Sessions.
- SEND Youth Survey.

This coproduction with children & young people, families, and key partners, will remain a focus during the delivery of our SEND & Inclusion Strategy. Feedback highlighted that there are things we are doing well, and things we need to improve.

## What we have done well:

- New educational settings have been built.
- Specialist teams have been created or expanded including; Early Development & Inclusion (EDIT) Team the Autism Team and the Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Team.
- A new model of therapeutic practice has been introduced.
- Clear standards of SEND provision in schools have been set.
- Neurodiversity Service created with peer support available whilst awaiting assessment.
- 'Through My Eyes' project has helped develop the skills of staff working with children and young people with SLCN.

## What needs to improve:

- Early identification and support of SEND needs.
- Improved transition, including transition to adulthood.
- Additional local provision required to meet need; particularly for SEMH, Autism and acute anxiety.
- More consistent access to employment related activity.
- Additional short break and respite provision, including increasing access to extracurricular activities for those children and young people with EHCPs.
- Continued upskilling of the workforce to ensure confidence in identifying and working with children and young people with SEND needs.
- Increased family confidence in school's abilities to meet SEND needs including in mainstream provision and without the need for an EHCP.
- Ensuring support is available throughout West Berkshire, reducing family's needs to travel to access the support they need.

*Schools are struggling to meet the emotional and mental health needs of their learners, while parents are struggling to access the right services at the right time – Case Review completed as part of DBV programme.*

*SENCOs and Parents/Carers both said they didn't believe the schools had the right resources to meet SEN Learners' needs – Listening Forums as part of DBV Programme.*

*The overwhelming sensory environment and inflexibility of school policies in mainstream secondary schools means many SEN learners are unable to access mainstream learning - Case Review completed as part of DBV programme.*

*I think that the key area that would be useful in delivering improved SEND provision in mainstream schools would be additional funding so that sufficient staffing can be in place to meet children's needs. – SENCo feedback as part of DBV programme.*

*Individual teaching staff and support staff are very receptive to my child's needs -and seek to be proactive but the need and demand is too great for them to be able to offer the level of support my child needs. – Parent feedback as part of DBV programme.*

*SEMH take up so much classroom time. Those children who don't necessarily need EHCPs then end up becoming an EHCP child because they don't have support earlier on...Some children need ASD unit. These children could be supported in mainstream without EHCP if they have somewhere to go and calm down during the day – SENCo's describing the challenges and support provided for children and young people with increasingly complex SEMH and Autism needs as part of DBV programme.*

*My teachers know that I am different from a lot of the other children and are trying to help me learn how to play and communicate better with the other children – Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)*

*A quiet space helps me to learn and to focus like the HRB [Hearing Resource Base]. I enjoy Sensory Circuits because it helps me warm up for the day ahead of me – Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)*

*Everything is good at the moment. More career advice in the next few years would be good as well as a variety of work experience. – Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)*

*Having some clubs or places i can go to meet people and friends like me - Young adult feedback as part of SEND Review (2023)*



## Our Approach and Priorities.

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The Purpose of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy is to ensure:

*Children and young people with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.*

### Our Approach:

Co-production with children, young people & families

Early Help & Prevention

Maximising independence for children and young people with SEND

Person-centred & trauma informed approaches

A joined-up approach to meeting children and young people's needs

Supporting families as close as possible to where they live



## Our Priorities & Goals:

The priorities & goals of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy

<p>Priority 1: Early Years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the take-up of the Early Years entitlement, particularly for our most vulnerable families.</li> <li>• Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this.</li> <li>• Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5.</li> <li>• Ensure our schools and practitioners are well prepared for meeting the needs of our children transitioning from the Early Years to school, with the right systems and processes in place, including effective collaboration between settings/practitioners</li> </ul>
<p>Priority 2: Early Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early.</li> <li>• Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support.</li> <li>• Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early.</li> <li>• Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.</li> </ul>
<p>Priority 3: Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the capability of our local schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.</li> <li>• Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.</li> <li>• Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education.</li> <li>• Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings.</li> <li>• Support our local schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.</li> </ul>
<p>Priority 4: Developing local specialist provision &amp; support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally.</li> <li>• Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision.</li> <li>• Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision.</li> <li>• Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons.</li> <li>• Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short break offer to better meet the needs of children &amp; young people with SEND and their families locally</li> </ul>

<p>Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our pupils for some, or all, of their education.</li> <li>• Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need.</li> <li>• Further develop short- and medium-term Alternative Provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools.</li> <li>• Develop short- and medium-term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.</li> </ul>
<p>Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation to adulthood for young people with SEND and their families.</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships.</li> <li>• Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning.</li> <li>• Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community.</li> <li>• Ensure pathways from children’s to adults’ health services work smoothly and are clearly understood.</li> </ul>

### Enabling the delivery of our priorities

- To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use & share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard to enable leaders’ effective oversight.
- Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.
- To explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Development of a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.
- To work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.
- Supporting the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders are able to respond to the views of children & young people and their families.
- Enhancing the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders are able to respond to the views of children and young people.
- To ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.

## Delivery Plan

There is a detailed delivery plan covering the period April 2024 – March 25 supporting this strategy. It will be reviewed and updated annually. A summary of the plan for 24/25 is provided below.

## Summary - ONE Plan: DBV Programme & SEND and Inclusion Strategy

### INNOVATION IN SEND

#### ONE PLAN : DBV Programme & SEND and Inclusion Strategy

	Priority 1: Early Years	Priority 2: Early Intervention	Priority 3: Inclusion	Priority 4: Developing local specialist provision & support	Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood	YEAR
<b>DBV Workstream 1 - Clear communications with families and wider local area partners to support access to services and the SEND system when they need it.</b> <i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of the communications strategy and parent champion programme to improve engagement, especially of our most vulnerable families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping of existing services to ensure clear pathways for referral and this will be communicated on an updated co-produced Local Offer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewing decision making processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the Local Offer</li> </ul>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation to adulthood for young people with SEND and their families.</li> <li>Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships.</li> </ol>	2024-5
<b>DBV Workstream 2 - Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP.</b> <i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the Early Development and Inclusion Team (EDIT) to enable the team to take direct referrals from early years settings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit of schools' additional SEND training needs and create a plan to meet identified gaps.</li> <li>Ensure existing SEN support teams work in a coordinated way and provide a single point of referral/ access.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to provide outreach support to mainstream schools from our special schools and the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (ISS)</li> <li>Whole School Mental Health Project to be expanded and offered to all mainstream schools in West Berkshire, to be evaluated after one year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From our gap analysis identify any gaps which are barriers to inclusive practice in our mainstream schools, identify mechanisms by which these gaps can be addressed (through commissioning or co-commissioning) to further support our schools and settings.</li> <li>Developing and sharing a best practice guide to support schools and settings on the most effective use of funding Element 2 Review to the use of element 2 to promote targeted intervention at SEN support through early identification of need and timely access to appropriate resources.</li> <li>Develop a Transitions Support Programme, to be led by schools and co-produced in clusters, to ensure that children and young people are appropriately supported to successfully transfer into their next mainstream provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand better the needs of the current and future cohorts of children with SEND in order to ensure the availability of the type of education provisions required to meet need, the development of a SEND Sufficiency Strategy.</li> <li>Undertake a banding review of unit costs of mainstream, maintained special and alternative provision to ensure parity and alignment with local and national funding arrangements.</li> <li>Reviewing and updating of Strategic and Operational commissioning and procurement practices, in relation to placements and Alternative Provision - including brokerage and contract management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go out to the market to develop a range of alternative provision available in West Berkshire to meet individualised needs of our children and young people.</li> <li>Establish commissioning and quality assurance processes in relation to alternative provision</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning.</li> <li>Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community.</li> <li>Ensure pathways from children's to adults' health services work smoothly, and are clearly understood.</li> </ol>	2024-5
<b>SEND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024-2029</b> <i>Priorities</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the take-up of the Early Years entitlement, particularly for our most vulnerable families.</li> <li>Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this.</li> <li>Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5.</li> <li>Ensure our schools and practitioners are well prepared for meeting the needs of our children transitioning from the Early Years to school, with the right systems and processes in place, including effective collaboration between settings/practitioners.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early.</li> <li>Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support.</li> <li>Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early.</li> <li>Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the capability of our local schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.</li> <li>Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.</li> <li>Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education.</li> <li>Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings.</li> <li>Support our local schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally.</li> <li>Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision.</li> <li>Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision.</li> <li>Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons.</li> <li>Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short breaks offer to better meet the needs of children &amp; young people with SEND and their families locally.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our pupils for some or all of their education.</li> <li>Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need.</li> <li>Further develop short- and medium-term Alternative Provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools.</li> <li>Develop short and medium term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.</li> </ol>	2024-9	
<b>Enabling the delivery of our priorities.</b>							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use &amp; share data more effectively, and to develop a digital dashboard enabling leaders' effective oversight.</li> <li>Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).</li> <li>Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.</li> <li>Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.</li> <li>Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children &amp; young people and their families.</li> <li>Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children and young people.</li> <li>Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.</li> </ul>							

## Glossary

Abbreviation	Word(s)	Meaning
AP	Alternative Provision	Settings which provide an education to children and young people who are unable to attend a mainstream school.
CYP	Children and young people	The children and young people being thought about.
DBV	Delivering Better Value	A programme run by the Department for Education (DfE) to support Local Authorities, and their partners, to improve the delivery of SEND Services for children and young people whilst working to ensure that funding remains available to deliver these services.
DfE	Department for Education	The DfE have responsibility for children's services and education (including Early Years, Schools, Further and Higher Education Policy, Apprenticeships and wider skills) in England.
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant	A ring-fenced amount of money from the Government which pays for individual budgets in maintained schools, academies and free schools.
EBSA	Emotional Based School Avoidance	This is when children and young people, who want to attend school, have a reduced, or non-attendance at school due to emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues.
EHCNA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	A joined-up assessment of a child or young person's Education, Health and Social Care needs completed by the Local Authority.
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan	A plan which details the Education, Health and Social Care support provided to a child or young person with SEND.
HNB	High Needs Block	The budget within the Dedicated Schools Grant that is used to pay for support for children and young people with SEND.
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) looks at the current and future health and care needs of the local area which then informs the planning and buying of health, well-being and social care services within that local area.
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty	This is when children and young people find it much harder than their peers to develop the skills to understand concepts.
PCF	Parent/Carer Forum	A group of parents or carers of children and young people with SEND who work with the Local Authority and other providers to make sure that the services they provide meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families.

PfA	Preparing for Adulthood	The support provided to children and young people with SEND which helps them to improve the independence and life skills they will need as an adult.
Census	School Census	An electronic collection of pupil data from Primary, Secondary, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units.
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs	A type of special educational need in which children and young people can find it hard to manage their emotions and how they behave.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities	A learning difficulty or disability which requires special educational provision to be made for a child or young person.
SEN Support	SEN Support	This is what schools and similar settings use to find, and meet the needs of, children and young people with SEND.
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs	This is when someone finds it hard to communicate, both communicating with others, but also understanding what others are communicating to them.
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty	This is when someone finds it hard with certain parts of learning for example; they may have Dyslexia or Dyscalculia.

## Innovation in SEND: DBV Programme & SEND and Inclusion Strategy

**DRAFT DELIVERY PLAN 2024/25 v.6**

Innovation in SEND combines both the DBV Programme and SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029.

The two workstreams of the DBV Programme in 2024 -2025:

- a) Clear communications with families and wider local area partners to support access to services and the SEND system when they need it.
- b) Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP.

From April 2024 to March 2025 these are delivered by four task groups: -

1. GAP analysis to Inform Local Provision/Need
2. Supporting Inclusive Practice
3. Financial Sustainability
4. Ensuring Sufficiency

The DBV Programme is incorporated into the overarching priorities and enablers of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy.

There are six priorities and eight enablers identified in the Strategy:

- Priority 1: Early Years
- Priority 2: Early Intervention

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- Priority 3: Inclusion
- Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision and Support
- Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision
- Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood
- Enablers:
  - Digital Strategy
  - JSNA
  - Digitising EHCPs
  - Commissioning and QA assurance resource and function
  - Improved Governance and Oversight
  - Supporting the Parent Carer Forum
  - Supporting the SEND Youth Forum
  - Effective use of the High Needs Block of funding.

This delivery plan sets out the **tasks that will be undertaken against each priority for the period April 2024 – March 2025**. The delivery plan will be reviewed annually in February, and new tasks (and enablers) will be identified for the following 12-month period.

 = DBV Workstreams

<b>Priority 1: Early Years</b>						
<b>No.</b>	<b>Task &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Governance</b> 1 April 2024- 31 March 2025	<b>RAG Status</b> *	<b>Commentary</b>
1.1	<b>Ensure the take-up of the Early Years education entitlement; particularly for our most vulnerable families.</b>					

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1.1.1	Deliver the Communication Strategy and Parent Champion Programme to improve engagement, especially of our most vulnerable families.	September 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Beth Kelly	DBV Task group: GAP analysis to Inform Local Provision/Need		
1.1.2	Ensure that the Local Offer clearly directs users to the information they need regarding support for children in the Early Years, including information on Early Years settings, and that this is publicised with Health Visitors, and other relevant colleagues, to improve take up of the Early Years entitlement.	October – November 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Beth Kelly/ Jessica Monteith - Chachuat	DBV Task group: GAP analysis to Inform Local Provision/Need		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EY Take up data.</li> <li>• Increase in visits to EY Local Offer pages.</li> </ul>						
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this.</b>					
1.2.1	Establish a multi-agency pre-school triage system to identify children in need of support as early as possible.	September 2024	Karen Bartlett	DBV: Task Group Supporting Inclusive Practice		
1.2.2	Review referral routes for occupational therapists and paediatricians.	TBC <b>(DBV)</b>	TBC - Ask ICB	DBV Task Group: Gap analysis to		



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				inform Local Provision/Need		
1.2.3	Enhance the Early Development and Inclusion Team (EDIT) to enable them to respond to the concerns of Early Years Setting for both referred and non-referred children.	May 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Karen Bartlett	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
1.2.4	Increase the take up of health visitor 2-year checks.	TBC	TBC (Public Health )	DBV Task Group – Gap Analysis to Inform Local Provision /Need		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of children whose needs are identified at pre-school.</li> <li>• Health visitor 2-year check take up data.</li> </ul>						
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5.</b>					
1.3.1	Develop clear guidance for early years settings on what should be ordinarily available for children with SEND.	In place September 24 <b>(DBV)</b>	Sarah Whatmore / Beth Kelly	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice –		
1.3.2	Audit training needs of early years settings and revise the SEND training offer to meet identified needs.	May/ June 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Sarah Whatmore	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take up of Early Years Inclusion Fund.</li> <li>• Take up of Early Years Training Offer by settings.</li> </ul>						

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1.4	<b>Ensure our schools and practitioners are well prepared for meeting the needs of our children transitioning from the Early Years to school, with the right systems and processes in place, including effective collaboration between settings/practitioners.</b>					
1.4.1	Introduce a transitions partnership agreement between early years settings and primary schools.	September 2024 (DBV)	Beth Kelly	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice –		
1.4.2	Review funding mechanisms for children under five with SEND in pre-school settings and maintained nursery and primary schools to ensure children have continuity of support on transition.	September 2024 (DBV)	Jane Seymour	DBV Task Group: Financial Sustainability		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of settings signed up to transitions partnerships agreement.</li> <li>Packages of support in place for children transitioning into primary schools.</li> <li>Numbers of statutory requests at Early Years/ Reception/ Yr1.</li> </ul>						
<p><b>Priority 2: Early Intervention</b></p>						
<b>No.</b>	<b>Task &amp; Actions</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Governance</b>	<b>RAG Status</b> *	<b>Commentary</b>

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2.1	<b>Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early.</b>					
2.1.1	Audit schools additional training needs and create a plan to meet identified needs.	May/ June 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Karen Bartlett	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
2.1.2	Develop accredited training for teaching assistants who work with children with SEND.	July 2026	Karen Bartlett	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
2.1.3	Adapt the West Berkshire SEND Identification Handbook for secondary schools.	Dec 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Karen Bartlett	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
2.1.4	Promote use of resources developed by the CYP Integrated Therapy Service (CYPIT) to support children with speech and language, sensory and motor difficulties.	Sept 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Karen Bartlett	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
2.1.5	Review the results of the pilot of SPENCER 3D (an identification tool for schools) and roll out more widely if there is evidence of effectiveness.	TBC	Mairi Evans (Berkshire Healthcare)	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training offer take up.</li> <li>• Survey on practitioners confidence in meeting SEND needs (Jan/ Feb).</li> <li>• Requests for therapy assessments data.</li> <li>• Reduction in requests for EHC Needs Assessments with needs being met at an earlier stage.</li> </ul>						

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of SPENCER 3D profiles being completed allowing for analysis of pilot and a decision as to whether to roll out more widely.</li> </ul>						
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support</b>					
2.2.1	Improve awareness and take up of early help services	March 2025	Stephanie Coomber	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
2.2.2	Map existing services to ensure clear pathways for referral. This will be communicated on a revised and updated Local Offer.	June 2024 (DBV)	Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: GAP analysis to inform Local Provision/Need		
2.2.3	Ensure existing SEN support teams work in a more coordinated way and provide a single point of referral/ access.	August 2024 (DBV)	Jane Seymour	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take up of Early Help Services.</li> <li>Hits on Early Help Local Offer.</li> <li>Reduced education placement breakdown, reduced exclusions/ suspensions, increased attendance.</li> <li>Survey on practitioners' confidence in meeting SEND needs (Jan/ Feb).</li> <li>No of schools accessing additional support service.</li> </ul>						

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2.3	<b>Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early.</b>					
2.3.1	Implement a whole School Mental Health Project, delivered through the Education Psychology team, to be expanded and offered to all schools in West Berkshire, to be evaluated after one year.	September 24 – August 2025 (DBV)	Kate Pike	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. of mental health surgeries undertaken.</li> <li>• No. of CYP discussed at surgeries.</li> <li>• Evaluations of training delivered for workshops.</li> <li>• Staff confidence in applying learnt strategies within the classroom.</li> <li>• Pre and post group interventions RCADS (revised children’s anxiety and depression scale).</li> </ul>						
2.4	<b>Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.</b>					
2.4.1	Raise awareness amongst parents and practitioners of services for neurodiverse children which can be accessed without a diagnosis and increase take up of those services.	July 2024	Beth Kelly/ Miranda Walcott	DBV Task Group: GAP Analysis to inform local provision		
2.4.2	Work with colleagues in the health system to review access criteria for the Autism service, to explore increasing capacity to meet demand for earlier intervention through a revised service offer.	July 2024 (DBV)	Karen Bartlett/ Miranda Walcott	DBV Task Group: Analysis to inform local provision		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p>						

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- TBC – confirm with DCO.
- Increased take up of pre-diagnosis offer.
- Improved waiting times from referral to treatment for children aged 8+ and under 8.

**Priority 3: Inclusion**

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance	RAG Status *	Commentary
3.1	<b>Increase the capability of our local schools to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in a mainstream setting.</b>					
3.1.1	Identify schools which have the capacity and will benefit from the creation of additional SEND inclusion spaces (including resource bases) and support the development of capital bids.	June/ July 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Mark Lewis/ Hannah Geddert	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
3.1.2	From our gap analysis identify any gaps which are barriers to inclusive practice in our mainstream schools, identify mechanisms by which these gaps can be addressed (through commissioning or co-commissioning) to further support our schools and settings	July 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Catherine Kane	DBV: Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
3.1.3	Developing and sharing a best practice guide to support schools and settings on the most effective use of funding Element 2 Review the use of element 2 to promote targeted	August 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Financial sustainability		

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	intervention at SEN support through early identification of need and timely access to appropriate resources.					
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in no. of inclusion spaces/ resource bases, including in planning stage.</li> <li>• Reduction in number of statutory assessment requests from schools.</li> <li>• Fewer requests for statutory assessments in Early Years and KS1.</li> <li>• Schools confidence in ability to meet needs at Element 2 (SURVEY).</li> </ul>						
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.</b>					
3.2.1	Develop a Delivery Plan to support schools in reducing the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.	TBC	SM SEMH / Nicola Ponton	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
3.2.2	Review communication and information sharing processes across teams within education, and more broadly, to ensure information is shared at the earliest opportunity.	TBC	SM SEMH / Nicola Ponton	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
3.2.3	Develop a sharing of best practice guide to support schools in effectively implementing the therapeutic approaches training they have received.	TBC	SM SEMH / Nicola Ponton	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		
3.2.4	Review how grants of support are applied for, and allocated, to ensure sustainability and positive impact.	TBC	SM SEMH / Nicola Ponton	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice		

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<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions.</li> <li>• Increase in number of behaviour polices which reflect the therapeutic approaches training schools have received.</li> </ul>						
3.3	<p><b>Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education.</b></p>					
3.3.1	<p>Develop a Transitions Support Programme, to be led by schools and co-produced in clusters, to ensure that children and young people are appropriately supported to successfully transfer into their next mainstream provision.</p>	<p>May/ July 2024  Implementation August 2024– March 2025 <b>(DBV)</b></p>	<p>Karen Bartlett</p>	<p>DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice</p>		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions.</li> <li>• No. of children with an EHCP in a phased transfer year group remaining in mainstream.</li> <li>• No of children on SEN Support in a phased transfer year group transferring without recourse to an EHC assessment request.</li> <li>• Reduction in placements at AP and INMSS made at secondary transition.</li> </ul>						
3.4	<p><b>Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings.</b></p>					
3.4.1	<p>Review and develop special school outreach service, with identified funding and revised Service Level Agreement.</p>	<p>August 2024 <b>(DBV)</b></p>	<p>Karen Bartlett</p>	<p>DBV Task Group; Supporting inclusive practice</p>		



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3.4.2	Review and develop Pupil Referral Unit outreach service, with identified funding and revised Service Level Agreement.	January 2025	Nicola Ponton/Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of schools accessing outreach support.</li> <li>Satisfaction with SISS (SURVEY)</li> <li>Satisfaction with PRU outreach service (SURVEY)</li> <li>Reduction in suspensions/ exclusions and increased attendance.</li> </ul>						
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Support our Local Schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.</b>					
3.5.1	Establish a community of practice group to gain an understanding of how children and young people with EBSA are being supported locally and to disseminate good practice, ensuring there is a shared understanding across the local area.	TBC	SM SEMH	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice – EBSTA T & F Group		
3.5.2	Develop a programme of learning for our schools to ensure our workforce is confident in supporting children and young people with EBSA.	TBC	SM SEMH	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice -EBSA T & F Group		
3.5.3	Explore increasing capacity within the EBSA service to meet demand for earlier intervention.	TBC	SM SEMH	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice -EBSA T & F Group		

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3.5.4	Review, and re-launch, our EBSA guidance.	TBC	SM SEMH	DBV Task Group: Supporting Inclusive Practice -EBSA T & F Group		
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**Measures of success (how will we know?)**

- Reduction in number of pupils absent from school due to EBSA.

**Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision & Support**

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance	RAG Status *	Commentary
4.1	<b>Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally.</b>					
4.1.1	Understand better the needs of the current and future cohorts of children with SEND to ensure the availability of the type of education provisions required to meet need, the development of a SEND Sufficiency Strategy	July 2024 (DBV)	Catherine Kane/ Azim Mohamed	DBV Task Group; Ensuring Sufficiency		
4.1.2	Undertake a banding review of unit costs of mainstream, maintained special and alternative provision to ensure parity and alignment with local and national funding arrangements	May-August 2024 (DBV)	Catherine Kane / Helen Redding	DBV Task Group: Financial Sustainability		
4.1.3	Review and updating of Strategic and Operational commissioning and	June 2024 (DBV)	Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group:		

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	procurement practices in relation to placement and Alternative Provision - including brokerage and contract management			Ensuring Sufficiency		
4.1.4	Review decision making processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the Local Offer.	May-August 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	Jane Seymour	DBV Task Group: Financial Sustainability		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of unit costs with statistical neighbours and national benchmarking.</li> <li>• Reduction in requests for EHC Needs Assessments.</li> <li>• Clear and transparent decision-making processes published on the Local Offer.</li> <li>• Reduction in unit costs for placements in IMNS and AP.</li> <li>• Reduction in price increase in current high-cost placements in IMNS and AP.</li> <li>• Increase in sustainable AP provision.</li> <li>• % of children placed in good, or outstanding, provision.</li> </ul>						
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision.</b>					
4.2.1	Develop a 12-place provision in the west of the Authority for primary age children with Autism / SEMH (an equivalent provision to Kennet Valley Primary School Autism / SEMH provision in the east of the Authority)	Longer term 5 years (in place 27/28)	Jane Seymour / Hannah Geddert	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
4.2.2	Explore opportunities to develop MLD resourced provision in secondary mainstream schools	2026/27	Jane Seymour / Hannah Geddert	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		

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4.2.3	Develop primary MLD /SLD units in a network of primary schools (the total number of units to be determined by the Sufficiency Strategy)	2026/27	Jane Seymour / Hannah Geddert	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
4.2.4	Work with our Resource Provisions to review, and amend, their admissions criteria, supporting them to meet the needs of more complex children.		Jane Seymour / Hannah Geddert	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of available local specialist placements in mainstream provision.</li> <li>Reduction in INMSS use and spend.</li> </ul>						
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision.</b>					
4.3.1	Build additional classrooms at The Castle School to create additional places by 2025	By 2025	Hannah Geddert / Jane Seymour	DBV Task Group: Ensuring sufficiency		
4.3.2	Determine whether the long term need for special school places for children with learning difficulties can be met through expansion of existing local special schools or whether an additional special school needs to be developed, in partnership with neighbouring Local Authorities.	Sept 2024 (sufficiency strategy required)	Mark Lewis	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of specialist local provision places.</li> <li>Reduction in INMSS use and spend.</li> </ul>						

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<b>4.4</b>	<b>Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons.</b>					
4.4.1	Review Local Authority policy on education of children not attending schools for health or other reasons (S19)	July 2024 (AMD asked for by September)	Melissa Perry/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
4.4.2	Determine what additional resources are needed to ensure that the duty to make suitable provision for children not attending school for health or other reasons is fully met	July/ September 2024	Melissa Perry/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group : Ensuring Sufficiency		
4.4.3	Ensure that there is the capacity to create and monitor bespoke educational packages for children who are not attending school (including through the use of personal budgets)	September 2024	Neil Goddard (AP Co-ordinator post – costed in HNB) talk to AMD	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in Complaints (Stage 1 and Stage 2) &amp; Local Government Ombudsman cases.</li> <li>• Reduction of cases in which children are not in receipt of education (S19), and a reduction in the time that they are out of education.</li> </ul>						
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short break offer to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families, locally.</b>					
4.5.1	Conduct an audit of short breaks available locally and measure take up.	September/ October 2024	Hannah Geddert/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency - Short Breaks Task Group		

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4.5.2	Work with local providers to support the development of services to address gaps, e.g. after school and holiday provision in the East of the Authority, post-16 short breaks and short breaks for children with complex health needs	October 2024	Hannah Geddert/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency - Short Breaks Task Group		
4.5.3	Review the support available for families through Parent Carer Needs Assessments and the criteria for accessing support through Parent Carer Needs Assessments.	October 2024	Hannah Geddert / Catherine Kane / Adult Social Care	DBV Task Group; Gap analysis to inform Local Provision/Need		

**Measures of success (how will we know?)**

- Increased offer for assessed and non-assessed short breaks, including in the East.
- Satisfaction rates (SURVEY).

**Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision**

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance	RAG Status *	Commentary
5.1	<b>Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need.</b>					
5.1.1	Develop and deliver an appropriate strategy for Alternative Provision in West Berkshire; co-produced with our schools, children and young people, their families.	July 2024	SM SEMH / Nicola Ponton/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		

**Measures of success (how will we know?)**

- TBC.

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5.2	<b>Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our learners for some, or all, of their education.</b>					
5.2.1	Go out to the market to develop a range of alternative provision available in West Berkshire to meet individualised needs of our children and young people	January 2025 (DBV)	SM for SEMH	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
5.2.2	Develop guidance for schools on commissioning and monitoring the enhanced alternative provision offer	September 2024	Hannah Geddert/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
5.2.3	Establish commissioning and quality assurance processes in relation to alternative provision	September 2024 (DBV)	Catherine Kane / Brokerage	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
5.2.4	Create and embed the AP directory into the Local Offer website	August 2024	Brokerage	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
<p><b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased AP offer.</li> <li>• Fewer mainstream placement breakdowns.</li> <li>• Reduced INMSS.</li> <li>• Reduction in second chance mainstream placements and AP and specialist placements, from mainstream.</li> <li>• Regular QA reports provided.</li> </ul>						
5.3	<b>Further develop short- and medium-term alternative provision to enable students to re-engage</b>					

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	<b>with education and return to mainstream schools (iCollege).</b>					
5.3.1	Quantify the level of demand for short- and medium-term alternative provision (to inform revised AP implementation plan)	July 2024 <b>(DBV)</b>	SM for SEMH/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
5.3.2	Develop additional KS3 capacity for medium term in-reach turnaround placements	Sept-Dec 2024 (in place for Jan 2025)	SM for SEMH/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of AP places at iCollege.</li> <li>• Increased AP placements from other providers.</li> <li>• Reduction in INMSS.</li> <li>• Reduction in exclusions and managed moves.</li> <li>• Overall increased attendance data.</li> </ul>						
5.4	<b>Develop short- and medium-term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.</b>					
5.4.1	Ensure that there are short term education placements available for children with high level needs moving into the area (for example Children in Care returning to or placed in West Berkshire; Pupils with a special school named on their EHCP who have recently moved into area), or at risk of PEX from specialist placement, whilst alternative permanent placements are identified.	July 2024	Melissa Perry/ Catherine Kane	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b>						



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- Reduction in numbers of children without a school place (target 0).
- Reduction in time out of school placement.

**Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood- Not DBV**

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance	RAG Status *	Commentary
6.1	<b>Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation for adulthood for young people with SEND and their families.</b>					
6.1.1	Work with the Parent Carer Forum to plan and deliver transition themed workshops for young people with SEND and their families	Jan/ Feb 2025	Beth Kelly/ Lucy Manners	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
6.1.2	Review and improve the Preparation for Adulthood content of the SEND Local Offer website	October – November 2024	Lucy Manners/ Jessica Monteith-Chachuat / Beth Kelly/ Elisha Stephens	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased hits on P4A page of Local Offer.</li> <li>• Increased satisfaction (Survey).</li> <li>• Reduction in NEET.</li> </ul>						
6.2	<b>Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the</b>					

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	<b>development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships.</b>					
6.2.1	Seek Council accreditation as a Disability Confident Employer	January 2025	HR	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
6.2.2	Explore opportunities to reinstate the Council's work experience programme for young people with SEND	March 2025	HR/ Lucy Manners	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
6.2.3	Work in partnership with 'Ways into Work' to offer supported internship placements at the Council	March 2025	HR/ Lucy Manners	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
6.2.4	Work with Newbury College and 'Ways into Work' to increase the number of supported internships available locally	September 2024	Lucy Manners/ Jane Seymour	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
6.2.5	Explore opportunities to procure a joint children and adults' supported employment service, in place of the two separate services which currently exist	October 2024	Catherine Kane	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased numbers of young people with SEND in supported internships.</li> <li>• Increased numbers of young people with SEND in supported internships with WBC.</li> </ul>						
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning.</b>					
6.3.1	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and FE Providers setting out the expected uses of Element 3 funding.	October 2024	Lucy Manners	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		

**Innovation in SEND**

6.3.2	Introduce transition guidance / checklist to support successful transition from school to FE College	December 2024	Lucy Manners / Kirsty Jinks	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEET data.</li> <li>• Consistent offer across settings.</li> <li>• Destination measures.</li> <li>• Decrease in number of ISP placements.</li> <li>• Increased number of ceased EHCPs.</li> </ul>						
6.4	<b>Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community.</b>					
6.4.1	Create and promote a directory of services which offer meaningful opportunities for young people who may not be able to access paid employment.	October - November 2024	ASC - Magda Hove/ Hannah Geddert	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
<b>Measures of success (how will we know?)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in ISP placements.</li> <li>• Reduction in residential placements for 18-25 year olds.</li> </ul>						
6.5	<b>Ensure pathways from children to adults' health services work smoothly and are clearly understood.</b>					
6.5.1	Promote take up of Learning Disability health checks	TBC	Miranda Walcott	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		

**Innovation in SEND**

6.5.2	Map transition pathways for all health services accessed by young people with SEND and provide information to families in an easily accessible format	TBC	Miranda Walcott	Preparation for Adulthood Working Group		
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**Measures of success (how will we know?)**  
 The ICB are currently developing a data dashboard which will include measures of success and impact. Data is sent quarterly.

**7. Enablers**

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance	RAG Status *	Commentary
7.1	Develop a digital plan which enables us to collect, use & share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard enabling leaders' effective oversight.	Dashboard – July 2024 Longer term Plan – September (DBV)	Azim Mohamed	DBV Task Group; Gap analysis to inform Local Provision/Need / Data T & F Group		
7.2	Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.	TBC	Public Health/Hannah Geddert	DBV Task Group; Gap analysis to inform Local Provision/Need / Data T & F Group		
7.3	Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).	July 2024	Nicola Ponton/ Azim Mohamed	DBV Task Group: Data T & F Group		
7.4	Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to	August 2024 (DBV)	Catherine Kane/ Nicola Pontin	DBV Task Group:		

**Innovation in SEND**

	support the placements of children and young people with SEND.			Ensuring Sufficiency		
7.5	Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.	July 2024	Susan Tanner/ Hester Collicut	DBV Task Group: Ensuring Sufficiency		
7.6	Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children & young people and their families.	On-going <b>(DBV)</b>	Beth Kelly	DBV Task Group; Gap analysis to inform Local Provision/Need/Communication and Engagement T & F Group		
7.7	Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children and young people	On-going	Elisha Stephens/ Hannah Geddert	DBV Task Group: Gap analysis to inform Local Provision/Need/Communication and Engagement T & F Group		
7.8	Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clawback</li> <li>• Banding exercise</li> <li>• Use of Element 2</li> <li>• Review of HNB spend</li> </ul>	Schools Forum July 2024 (Clawback) <b>(DBV)</b>  August – September 2024 (Banding Exercise)	Helen Redding / Susan Tanner	DBV Task Group: Financial Sustainability		

Innovation in SEND

<b>*RAG Status</b>			
Not started	Started – delayed, or unresolved issue	Started – on track	Completed

# Covid & Recovery Task & Finish Group – Final Report

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Scrutiny Commission
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	24 September 2024
<b>Task &amp; Finish Group Chairman:</b>	Councillor Paul Dick
<b>Date Head of Service agreed report:</b> <i>(for Corporate Board)</i>	
<b>Date Task &amp; Finish Group agreed report:</b>	15 July 2024
<b>Report Author:</b>	Gordon Oliver

## 1 Purpose of the Report

This report presents the work of the Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group, which sought to identify lessons learned from the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery. The report makes recommendations based on the evidence gathered, which (if implemented) would improve preparedness for a future event.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

To consider the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations as outlined in Section 6 of this report and agree whether these should be referred to the Executive for consideration.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations are accepted, this may result in financial implications which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations are accepted, this may result in HR implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.

<b>Legal:</b>	There are no Legal implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations are accepted they may result in Legal implications which will be assessed in details if they are taken forward.			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations are accepted, this may result in risk management implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
<b>Property:</b>	There are no property implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations are accepted, this may result in property implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
<b>Policy:</b>	There are no policy implications arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations are accepted, this may result in policy implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
	<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		There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report. However, if accepted, proposals may have a positive impact on addressing health inequalities in the event of a future influenza type pandemic.



<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The proposed decision does not have any impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics. However, if accepted, the Task and Finish Group's recommendations may improve the response to a future pandemic for people with disabilities and other ethnic minority groups who were disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		X		There are no environmental impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Health Impact:</b>		X		There are no health impacts arising directly from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group's recommendations are accepted, this may result in improvements to the local response to a future influenza type pandemic.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		X		There are no ICT impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		X		There are no impacts for Digital Services arising directly from this report.
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>		X		There are no Council Strategy Priorities arising from this report, although if the Task and Finish Group's recommendations are accepted, this may result in improvements to provision of mental health support, which is captured within Priority 2: A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All.
<b>Core Business:</b>		X		Improving risk management and preparedness for a future event is part of the core business of delivering services.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		X		There are no data impacts associated with this report.

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>A full list of stakeholders and expert witnesses consulted is contained in the Task and Finish Group’s report.</p> <p>The following officers have been consulted on the report’s recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care)</li><li>• Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources)</li><li>• April Peberdy (Interim Service Director – Communities and Wellbeing)</li><li>• Carolyn Richardson (Service Manager – Joint Emergency Planning Unit)</li><li>• Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager)</li><li>• Fiona Simmonds (Education Place Planning Team Leader)</li></ul>
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## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report presents the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group set up by the Scrutiny Commission to review the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery, and the recommendations arising from that review.
- 4.2 Members of the Scrutiny Commission are invited to review the recommendations and consider whether these should be put to the Executive.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.2 At its meeting on 14 September 2023, the Scrutiny Commission agreed the terms of reference and membership for a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent recovery and develop recommendations for lessons learned that could be applied to similar future events.
- 5.3 The review focused on five core areas:
  - (1) Local resilience and preparedness for the pandemic
  - (2) Public health and emergency community support
  - (3) Support for local businesses
  - (4) Support for the education sector
  - (5) Support for the care sector

5.4 A copy of the Task and Finish Group’s terms of reference is provided in the Task and Finish Group’s report (Appendix A).

**Background**

5.5 The Task and Finish Group met seven times between October 2023 and June 2024 to hear evidence from expert witnesses in relation to all five aspects of the review. These included Council officers (including former officers) and representatives from partner organisations who supported in delivery of the local response.

5.6 Members were keen to get the perspectives of representatives from organisations who were recipients of the services provided by the Council to understand how they viewed the response. Witnesses were interviewed from the business, education and adult social care sectors. A full list of witnesses is provided in the Task and Finish Group’s report (Appendix A).

5.7 The Task and Finish Group also undertook primary research via online surveys of the local business community, headteachers, and town/parish councils and community groups. The survey findings are provided in the Task and Finish Group’s report (Appendix A)

5.8 Through evaluation of this evidence base and with technical support from officers, Members have been able to highlight a number of issues and pinpoint where potential improvements could be made, or where further work would be beneficial.

**6 Proposals**

6.1 The Task and Finish Group has developed a set of recommendations as set out below. Subject to the approval of the Scrutiny Commission, these recommendations will be referred to Executive for consideration on 7 November 2024 accompanied by a management response.

**Part 2a: Public Health and Emergency Community Support**

Ref	Recommendation	Lead
1	For the West Berkshire Chief Executive and his counterpart in the NHS, as a matter of urgency, to review the strengths and weaknesses in communications between the two organisations during the pandemic, and identify improvements or where better practice is needed.	WBC Chief Executive / Integrated Care Board Chief Executive
2	Do more to open channels of communication with key groups through: a) Building and maintaining a social media cascade to improve the reach of pandemic related communications and engagement of partners, particularly town/parish councils and local community groups.	Comms / Public Health/ Business Development Team

## Covid & Recovery Task & Finish Group – Final Report

	<p>b) Using Community Champions (trusted community representatives) to improve engagement with seldom heard communities, assist with communication of key messaging, and provide feedback about concerns within those communities.</p> <p>c) Building and maintaining a database of rural businesses in order to improve communications in the event of a future pandemic.</p>	
3	Provide regular hardcopy updates to cater for those residents who are not digitally enabled.	Comms
4	Review HR processes for sourcing additional staff resources during a pandemic with a focus on minimising delays, including recruitment of external staff, as well as rapid redeployment of Council staff where they are urgently required and restoring them to their original roles when no longer needed.	HR
5	Utilise Crest (or similar) for case logging from the outset of any future pandemics and consider greater use of Power BI and/or AI tools to help map virus transmission/outbreaks	All Services

### Part 2b – Emergency Community Support

Ref	Proposal	Lead
6	Consider how the voluntary sector could best be involved in the Gold, Silver, and Bronze command structure for future pandemic events.	Corporate Leadership Team
7	Ensure that all relevant emergency processes (including those developed by schools) are collated within a single repository and kept under review.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit

### Part 3 Supporting Local Businesses

Ref	Proposal	Lead
8	<p>Seek to harmonise discretionary funding schemes with other Berkshire local authorities with support from the Berkshire Prosperity Board, ensuring that any gaps in coverage are addressed in future schemes.</p> <p>Also, seek to identify and allocate staffing resources for grant administration in advance rather than reactively.</p>	Finance / Economic Development Team/ Corporate Leadership Team
9	Contact the other Berkshire local authorities to ask if they have undertaken a similar post-Covid review and if they would be willing to share their findings.	Corporate Leadership Team

10	Ensure that all relevant services coordinate to provide a single set of definitive advice about any temporary measures to support recovery (e.g., outdoor seating for pubs, cafés, and restaurants), taking a pragmatic approach wherever possible.	Licensing / Highways / Public Health
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#### Part 4 - Supporting the Education Sector

Ref	Proposal	Lead
11	Recruit temporary staff to provide additional cover for school support at the outset of any future pandemic – the level of support should be defined in future updates to pandemic/influenza plans.	Corporate Leadership Team / Education
12	Undertake a formal review to understand what measures were/were not effective for secondary schools (e.g. 'bubble' arrangements and movement of pupils around schools) to ensure that schools learn from best practice.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit/ Education
13	Review the mental health support available to headteachers and school staff.	Education

#### Part 5 - Supporting the Care Sector

Ref	Proposal	Lead
14	Consider what support unpaid carers might need during a pandemic and put a suitable plan together.	Adult Social Care
15	Review PPE policies to ensure that adequate stocks are held to meet local demand for an initial period (at least 4 weeks) while national supply systems are set up.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit
16	Challenge government guidance where it is not in the best interest of residents (e.g., discharge of patients from hospitals to care homes).	Corporate Leadership Team
17	Consider how the Council and care sector organisations could provide better peer support, sharing intelligence and best practice, and make provision for this within pandemic/influenza plans.	Adult Social Care
18	Add parents/carers of adults with learning difficulties to the Hub's contact list to ensure they receive adequate support.	Adult Social Care/ PPP

## 7 Other options considered

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

## 8 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposals outlined in Section 6 above have been agreed by the Task and Finish Group, based on the evidence presented. It is considered that these would help to improve the Council’s preparedness for a subsequent pandemic event and any subsequent response.
- 8.2 While some of these proposals could be actioned relatively quickly, at minimal cost and with existing resources, it is recognised that others would have financial and resource implications.

## 9 Appendices

Appendix A – Task and Finish Group Report

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### Corporate Board’s recommendation

\*(add text)

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### Background Papers:

None

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes:  No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
  - Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
  - Delays in implementation could compromise the Council’s position
  - Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months
  - Item is Urgent Key Decision
  - Report is to note only
-

**Wards affected:** All wards

**Officer details:**

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# Report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Covid and Recovery

(July 2024)

## Executive Summary

This report presents the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group set up by the Scrutiny Commission to review the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery, and the recommendations arising from that review.

The review focused on five core areas:

- (1) Local resilience and preparedness for the pandemic
- (2) Public health and emergency community support
- (3) Support for local businesses
- (4) Support for the education sector
- (5) Support for the care sector

The Task and Finish Group has developed a set of recommendations as set out below. Subject to the approval of the Scrutiny Commission, these recommendations will be referred to Executive for consideration on 7 November 2024 accompanied by a management response.

### ***Part 2a: Public Health and Emergency Community Support***

Ref	Recommendation	Lead
1	For the West Berkshire Chief Executive and his counterpart in the NHS, as a matter of urgency, to review the strengths and weaknesses in communications between the two organisations during the pandemic and identify improvements or where better practice is needed.	WBC Chief Executive / ICB Chief Executive
2	Do more to open channels of communication with key groups through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Building and maintaining a social media cascade to improve the reach of pandemic related communications and engagement of partners, particularly town/parish councils and local community groups.</li> <li>b) Using Community Champions (trusted community representatives) to improve engagement with seldom heard</li> </ol>	Comms / Public Health/ Building Communities Together/ Business Development Team

	communities, assist with communication of key messaging, and provide feedback about concerns within those communities. c) Building and maintaining a database of rural businesses in order to improve communications in the event of any future pandemic.	
3	Provide regular hardcopy updates to cater for those residents who are not digitally enabled.	Comms
4	Review HR processes for sourcing additional staff resources during a pandemic with a focus on minimising delays, including recruitment of external staff, as well as rapid redeployment of Council staff where they are urgently required and restoring them to their original roles when no longer needed.	HR
5	Review in more detail the use of Crest (or similar) for case logging from the outset of any future pandemics/other emergencies, and consider greater use of Power BI and/or AI tools to help map virus transmission/outbreaks	Public Health/ H&S/ Emergency Planning

### ***Part 2b – Emergency Community Support***

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
6	Consider how the voluntary sector could best be involved in the command structure for future pandemic events or other emergencies.	Corporate Leadership Team
7	Ensure that all relevant emergency processes (including those developed by schools) are collated within a single repository and kept under review.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit

### ***Part 3 Supporting Local Businesses***

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
8	Seek to harmonise discretionary funding schemes with other Berkshire local authorities with support from the Berkshire Prosperity Board, ensuring that any gaps in coverage are addressed in future schemes.  Also, seek to identify and allocate staffing resources for grant administration in advance rather than reactively.	Finance / Economic Development Team/ Corporate Leadership Team
9	Contact the other Berkshire local authorities to ask if they have undertaken a similar post-Covid review and if they would be willing to share their findings.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit
10	Review emergency plans to ensure that a structure can be put in place quickly to ensure that all relevant services coordinate to provide	Licensing / Highways /

	a single set of definitive advice about any temporary measures to support recovery (e.g., outdoor seating for pubs, cafés, and restaurants), taking a pragmatic approach wherever possible.	Public Health/ Joint Emergency Planning Unit
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#### ***Part 4 - Supporting the Education Sector***

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
11	Recruit temporary staff to provide additional cover for school support at the outset of any future pandemic – the level of support should be defined in future updates to pandemic/influenza plans.	Corporate Leadership Team / Education
12	Undertake a formal review to understand what measures were/were not effective for secondary schools (e.g. ‘bubble’ arrangements and movement of pupils around schools) to ensure that schools learn from best practice.	Education
13	Review the mental health support available to headteachers and school staff and, if necessary, identify what can be done to bolster the support.	Education
14	Review the education welfare resources provided to secure full attendance at schools and, if necessary, what can be done to bolster the support.	Education

#### ***Part 5 - Supporting the Care Sector***

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
15	Consider what support unpaid carers might need during a pandemic/other emergency and put a suitable plan together.	Adult Social Care
16	Review PPE policies to ensure that adequate stocks are held to meet local demand for an initial period (at least 4 weeks) while national supply systems are set up.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit
17	Challenge government guidance where it is not in the best interest of residents (e.g., discharge of patients from hospitals to care homes).	Corporate Leadership Team
18	Consider how the Council and care sector organisations could provide better peer support, sharing intelligence and best practice, and make provision for this within pandemic/influenza/emergency plans.	Adult Social Care
19	Develop a wider list of people who may need support to include parents/carers of adults with learning difficulties to be added to the Hub’s contact list.	Adult Social Care/ PPP

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by the Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group, which was established to undertake a review of the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery, and to develop recommendations for lessons learned that could be applied to similar future events.

## **2. Purpose and Membership of the Task and Finish Group**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Commission agreed the terms of reference and membership for a Task and Finish Group at its meeting on 14 September 2023. A copy of the terms of reference is provided in Appendix A.

- 2.2 The review focused on five core areas:

- (1) Local resilience and preparedness for the pandemic
- (2) Public health and emergency community support
- (3) Support for local businesses
- (4) Support for the education sector
- (5) Support for the care sector

- 2.3 The Task and Finish Group comprised the following Members:

- Councillor Paul Dick (Chairman)
- Councillor Patrick Clark\*
- Councillor Carolyne Culver
- Councillor Paul Kander
- Councillor Erik Pattenden

*(\* Councillor Clark stood down from the Task and Finish Group in May 2024 following his appointment as a Member of the Executive.)*

- 2.4 This review was intended to be complementary to the National Covid-19 Inquiry. The Council has given evidence to the National Inquiry along with other local authorities via the Local Government Association.

## **3. Meetings and Witnesses**

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group met seven times between October 2023 and June 2024 to hear evidence from a number of key witnesses. These included Council

officers past and present, and representatives from partner organisations who supported in delivery of the local response.

- 3.2 Members were keen to get the perspectives of representatives from organisations who were recipients of the services provided by the Council to understand their experiences of support and services provided by the Council during the pandemic. Witnesses were interviewed from the business, education and adult social care sectors. A full list of witnesses is provided below.
- 3.3 Members of the Task and Finish Group would like to thank all of the witnesses who took part in the review, particularly the former employees and external partners who were not obliged to attend. Throughout the review, Members were mindful of the fact that many of those giving evidence had been personally affected by the pandemic and may have found it difficult to relive their experiences.
- 3.4 The Task and Finish Group also undertook primary research via online surveys of the local business community, headteachers, and town/parish councils and community groups. Reference was also made to the Residents Survey that had been carried out by West Berkshire Council during the pandemic to collect feedback on the local response. Additionally, the Task and Finish Group was provided with various data sets that helped to quantify the impacts of the pandemic, and how effective the local response was in mitigating those impacts and meeting local needs.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Focus of Meeting</b>	<b>Witnesses</b>
10 Oct 2023	Review of the terms of reference  Part 1 – Resilience and Preparedness for the Pandemic	Nick Carter (former WBC Chief Executive)  Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care)  Tessa Lindfield (former Director of Public Health)  Matt Pearce (former Service Director – Communities & Wellbeing)  April Peberdy (Interim Service Director – Communities & Wellbeing)  Carolyn Richardson (Service Manager – JEPU)
12 Dec 2023	Part 2a – Public Health and Emergency Community Support	Melanie Best (Service Lead - Customer Engagement and Transformation)

	Draft Business Survey	<p>Graham Bridgman (former Executive Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing)</p> <p>Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager)</p> <p>Catherine Greaves (Senior Programme Officer)</p> <p>Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager)</p> <p>April Peberdy (Interim Service Director – Communities &amp; Wellbeing)</p>
16 Jan 2024	Part 2b – Emergency Community Support	<p>Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager)</p> <p>April Peberdy (Interim Service Director – Communities &amp; Wellbeing)</p> <p>Garry Poulson (former Director of Volunteer Centre West Berkshire)</p> <p>Susan Powell (former Safer Communities Partnership Team Manager)</p> <p>Carolyn Richardson (Service Manager – JEPU)</p>
27 Feb 2024	<p>Part 3 – Supporting Local Businesses</p> <p>Business Survey Results</p> <p>Draft Headteacher Survey</p>	<p>Warwick Heskins (Chairman and Director – Newbury BID)</p> <p>Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources)</p> <p>Sam Robins (Economy Manager)</p>
16 Apr 2024	<p>Part 4 – Supporting the Education Sector</p> <p>Headteacher Survey Results</p> <p>Draft Town/Parish Council and Community Group Survey</p>	<p>Chris Prosser (Headteacher, The Downs School)</p> <p>Carolyn Richardson (Service Manager – JEPU)</p>

		Fiona Simmonds (Assets Operations Team Leader)  Alison Webster (Headteacher, Thatcham Park Primary School)
28 May 2024	Part 5 – Supporting the Care Sector  Town/Parish Council and Community Group Survey Results	Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care)  Jane Edwards (Home Manager, Bupa Care Homes)  Carolyn Richardson (Service Manager – JEPU)

## 4. Findings

4.1 The Task and Finish Group uncovered many examples of good practice and overall Members felt that the local response had been well-coordinated and effective, particularly given the scale and fast-moving nature of the pandemic. However, a key focus of the review was to understand where decision making and processes could be improved, so West Berkshire Council and its partners could be better prepared for the next pandemic. Key findings from each of the sessions are outlined below.

### **Part 1 – Resilience and Preparedness for the Pandemic**

4.2 This part of the review considered risk management and emergency planning, as well as general preparedness for a pandemic, including structures, governance, processes and protocols.

4.3 Points of key learning were:

- Emergency planning and risk management processes were generally considered to be fit for purpose.
- There were plans at the West Berkshire, Berkshire, Thames Valley and national levels - the Berkshire Influenza Plan had been updated in anticipation of Covid spreading to the UK.
- A potential pandemic had been identified as a key risk prior to Covid and the national risk assessment now rated a future 'pandemic' as having the highest likelihood and impact.
- Working relationships locally, within Berkshire and across the Thames Valley were strong on the back of previous emergency planning exercises and Brexit preparations.
- A key challenge was the complex geography in the Thames Valley, with a mix of small unitary authorities and large counties.

- Despite being a health emergency, input from NHS colleagues to the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum Strategic Coordination Group was late and unnecessarily confusing – they did not lead the regional response and created their own, separate command structure.
- Within West Berkshire, leadership from senior officers and Members had been good and local command structures had worked well.
- While some local authorities had established outbreak Control Teams, West Berkshire had adopted a matrix approach, which had worked well.
- The lack of notice of changes to government policy and with no prior warning before being made public, had been a major challenge, but staff had been flexible and responsive, and had worked at pace/gone the extra mile to interpret and act on new directives and guidance.
- Council staff had been redeployed internally and to the NHS to support the Covid response – in most cases it was felt that there had been sufficient numbers of staff involved in the delivery of the local response, but there had been areas of pressure, such as the Hub, and key services including Public Health, the Public Protection Partnership, and Education.
- Staff who had been involved in coordinating the Covid response were unable to cover their normal duties and few posts were backfilled.
- A small number of officers in key roles had worked flat-out for long periods - if one or more of these individuals had fallen ill, the response could have been adversely affected.
- The Council had quickly moved to adopt new ways of working, including home working and remote meetings, however, the health system had opted for Teams over Zoom, which had presented difficulties.
- Any future pandemic would be different to Covid - while there would still be an emergency framework, each scenario would bring unique challenges, so it is not possible to plan all aspects of the response in advance.
- Plans at the national and regional levels will be updated once the national public inquiry had reported, but it is likely that a greater emphasis would be placed on a multi-agency approach.

### **Part 2a – Public Health and Emergency Community Support**

4.4 This part of the review looked at the Council's role in relation to:

- disseminating Covid-related information and advice to residents
- identification and containment of local outbreaks
- supporting the local vaccination programme



- coordination of the lateral flow testing programme

#### 4.5 Points of key learning were:

##### ***Communications***

- Covid had required a step-change in comms activity, but the Council had responded well, with both general and targeted comms across multiple channels, catering for a wide range of different audiences.
- The adoption of the Granicus system had allowed the Council to reach a large number of residents – over 40,000 households signed up to receive newsletter via email.
- Although some effort was made to reach non-digital audiences, feedback from the Parish Council/Community Group Survey suggested that more could have been done for this cohort.
- District and town/parish councillors were kept informed through weekly bulletins, which summarised the latest advice and actions being delivered locally.
- Effectiveness of comms had been measured through a variety of mechanisms, including a residents' survey focused on Covid-19 and the Council's response.
- The sheer number of meetings were very time-consuming, and the Comms Team had needed additional resource, but there had been challenges with timely recruitment and induction of staff.
- It was challenging to respond to national announcements, which often had little detail and short lead-times.
- Other local authorities had more engagement on social media, which suggested that there may opportunities to improve this (e.g., a cascade via parish councils and community social media groups).
- Numerous legacy benefits that remain as a result of changes put in place during the pandemic:
  - increased recognition across the Council of the importance of comms and engagement
  - a larger Comms Team that is better able to support the organisation
  - ongoing residents' newsletters
  - increased community engagement via live streaming of public meetings
  - improved links with external comms teams

## ***Outbreak Management***

- The process was managed through the Local Outbreak Management Group which had been responsible for writing/updating the Local Outbreak Control Plan – the group had worked well, with good support from all parties.
- Weekly Surveillance Cell meetings were used to review information and agree actions.
- A Care Home Task Group was established, and subject matter experts were identified for key settings such as schools.
- A Local Outbreak Engagement Board was set up to lead engagement with the public on Covid-19, endorse the Local Outbreak Control Plan/Comms Plan, provide political ownership of the local Covid-19 response and coordinate with neighbouring authorities regarding cross boundary outbreaks. Meetings were live-streamed and provided a key way for residents to keep up to date with developments – viewing figures suggested that engagement was good.
- Covid outbreak notifications were received from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). There was no dedicated tool for centrally recording notifications - West Berkshire Council eventually adopted the CREST system for this purpose, but each local authority had used their own proprietary systems.
- Power BI was used to help map Covid transmissions, but it had perhaps not been used to its fullest extent and new AI tools may offer new possibilities in future events.
- The Public Protection Partnership operated a local contact tracing service – initially, they could call down contacts for tracing from a central list, but they took control for all contacts when they found that they were able to successfully contact more residents than the national service.

## ***Vaccination Outreach Programme***

- The Public Health Team coordinated the local vaccination outreach programme to supplement the core NHS offer.
- Barriers that had affected the roll-out of the vaccine programme, included:
  - patients not being registered with a GP
  - out of date patient records
  - patients ignoring/not responding to invitation letters
  - patients not being able to travel to appointments
  - vaccine hesitancy

- The Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU) had also been involved in setting up the mass vaccination centres, since the NHS had struggled to find suitable large sites.
- Funding was secured from NHS England to support the local Covid-19 vaccination engagement and outreach community engagement sessions were commissioned to support the outreach vaccination clinics.
- Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) allocations were used to secure additional resource to manage the vaccination programme, and NHS Inequalities Funding was used to fund the outreach service itself.
- Priority groups were identified based on an understanding of who would be disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 and NHS data on which groups were under-served by universal vaccination services.
- Vaccine uptake rates were tracked across the duration of the pandemic to monitor the effectiveness of the outreach programme.
- The outreach programme was successful in reaching nearly all of the priority groups identified as being under-served and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination in West Berkshire was higher than the regional and national averages for nearly all groups.
- It was considered that a Community Champions approach could help to reduce the requirement to commission engagement providers in future.
- Officers considered that there may be benefits from having more Communicable Disease Outbreak Control/Pandemic Response capacity within the Council's Public Health and Communications Teams.
- There is also a need to develop risk communication and behaviour science knowledge and skills within the Public Health and Communications teams.

### ***Covid Testing***

- All aspects of the local response had to be developed locally, including strategy, sites, logistics, and providers.
- Joint working involving teams from across the Council was key to delivery of the Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) programme.
- An LFT Sub-Group was set up with separate cells for schools, care homes and community testing.
- Modelling had to be carried out for a number of different scenarios, including fixed/mobile/workplace testing sites.
- An agile approach was needed to respond to changes in testing requirements over the course of the pandemic, changes in test centre

availability, and the move to home test kits, and also to encourage people to use the Test and Trace Service.

- Testing sites were opened quickly in larger urban areas across West Berkshire, while a community car visited villages for 'community collect' and testing - this was scaled back over time with people encouraged to use online and pharmacy options.
- As part of the PCR testing programme, regional testing locations were established. The Department of Health and Social Care established a site at the Showground with the support of the JEPU. This had benefited West Berkshire residents, by virtue of having a convenient location, and it had also benefited the Showground.
- The Directors of Public Health had paid for a member of staff in the JEPU to coordinate mobile testing across the Thames Valley. These had been deployed as outbreaks had been detected.
- Plans had been put in place for surge testing - in the event of concerns about Covid levels in a particular area. Plans were developed by the JEPU for 10,000 people to be tested in a short period in order to provide a detailed picture of infection rates in areas of concern. Although the plan had not been tested in West Berkshire, it was still available and could be brought back into use as required.
- Communications were key to the success of the LFT programme, however, a Community Champion or Peer Educator approach would be a useful additional component of future outreach programmes.
- Significant uncertainties were caused by the way the programme was funded, with no guarantees that costs would be recouped.
- The Council had been forced to use recommended suppliers who were often more expensive than local alternatives.
- Healthwatch West Berkshire delivered community engagement on the LFT programme - they were able to mobilise rapidly and had good relationships with voluntary sector partners and communities.
- Solutions4Health were commissioned to deliver the LFT programme and were both proactive and reactive in their approach.
- The lack of resource meant those involved in the LFT programme worked long, intense hours for months on end.
- Officers felt that there remains a lack of resilience within the organisation, with the same individuals being used time and again to respond to emergencies.

## **Part 2b – Emergency Community Support**

4.6 This part of the review looked at the Council's role in relation to:

- implementing the test and trace system
- identifying vulnerable residents
- delivering practical support to residents
- provision of voluntary sector support
- addressing issues of loneliness and social isolation and providing mental health support
- safeguarding and providing support for victims of domestic abuse

4.7 Points of key learning were:

### ***Community Support Hub***

- The Hub was established by the Building Communities Together Partnership to offer practical, financial, and mental health support, to residents, with signposting/referrals to services and grants.
- No advice was provided by the government/LGA on how to set up a hub - our approach was to consider what support people might need and to set up to meet those needs rather than focusing on existing services.
- Details of clinically vulnerable residents were provided by the NHS – they were subsequently contacted by the Hub to ensure they had everything they needed and to provide emotional support.
- Residents welcomed the contact – even if they didn't need support, they welcomed the fact that someone cared.
- Staff often had to deal with difficult calls (e.g., residents who had lost loved ones, or terminally ill patients) and mental health support was provided to staff.
- The Hub worked well, but the volume of calls was overwhelming at times - use of temporary staff/putting business as usual activity on hold to allow more Council staff to be seconded could have helped with this.
- There was initially a disconnect between Adult Social Care staff and the Hub, but social workers were subsequently brought into the Hub.
- The Police provided support in terms of making welfare calls where there were concerns.
- There was anecdotal evidence of some individuals not being identified through the NHS data, but communities were good at identifying who

needed support, also some people self-declared as shielding and were not on the official NHS list.

- The voluntary sector had stood up quickly, with 90 groups across the district and 1,200 volunteers recruited within the initial 8-week period.
- The Hub worked closely with the voluntary sector and some financial support was offered to those organisations that were struggling to make ends meet.
- Weekly meetings were held with key partners throughout the pandemic.
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to how the voluntary sector could best be involved in the command structure in a future pandemic or emergency.
- The Covid Hub model was subsequently used as a template for the subsequent Ukraine and Cost of Living Hubs.

### ***Mental Health Support***

- A wide range of mental health resources were used to support residents' mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic, including online resources, and promotion of national campaigns.
- The Surviving to Thriving Fund was set up jointly with Greenham Trust where voluntary sector organisations could apply for up to £30,000 for projects to mitigate the mental health impacts of the pandemic - 26 organisations were awarded a total of £270,000.
- Mental health related presentations were incorporated within 'Community Conversations' that were held with local community groups.
- The Outbreak Management Fund was used to pay for local information resources, paid advertising on Facebook, and an additional member of staff in Education to provide mental health support for children and young people.
- Mental health first aid training was funded for people working or volunteering in voluntary sector organisations.
- The Public Health Team supported the 'Mental Health and Wellbeing in West Berkshire' event, which was focused on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, and was attended by voluntary sector organisations involved in providing support locally.
- Mental health information was provided for staff working in care homes.
- Mental health information and advice was provided to Council staff through various newsletters and events, and staff were trained as Mental Health First Aiders.

- Initiatives were developed to try and tackle social isolation and loneliness amongst vulnerable residents, including My Speaker Friend and Activity Bags.
- Community Conversations were held with grass roots community groups to provide them with support, advice and information to enable them to safely support vulnerable and lonely residents in their communities. The Community Conversations still take place and represent a key legacy from the pandemic.
- Various activities moved from face-to-face to online, including seated exercise programmes, and online carers meetings.
- The Community Life Connected Map was established to connect local community groups, facilitate sharing, learning and mutual support.
- Members had asked if volunteer networks had been maintained post-pandemic. It was confirmed that the legacy pool of volunteers was small, but people had come forward in large numbers and would be likely to do so again. Contact with local groups was being maintained through Community Conversations.

### ***Health Recovery***

- The Council developed a Recovery Strategy, which focused on:
  - The health of our population
  - The educational success of the district
  - The economic success of West Berkshire
  - A strong and supported community sector
  - An environmentally focussed renewal
  - An enhanced openness of how we work and sharing of information
  - The enhanced quality of life of our communities
- Reducing inequalities was a key priority for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the associated Delivery Plan included many actions focused on recovery.
- Body fat was a key factor that affected outcomes for Covid-19 patients, so weight management was a key focus of recovery – Government provided one-off funding, which was used to expand the Tier 2 Weight Management Service.
- A Health and Wellbeing booklet was produced with advice on budgeting, eating well, mental health, sleep, physical activity, and alcohol.
- A Nature for Health Coordinator was appointed to:

- improve physical and mental health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation through gardening and nature based activities
- reduce inequalities by supporting access for all and facilitating projects with communities that may be disadvantaged or harder to reach
- A garden room was provided at the Willows Care Home.
- Physical activity schemes were promoted to residents through a variety of channels in order to aid recovery.
- Active Travel Capability Fund grant was used to improve walking and cycling opportunities in West Berkshire, to contribute to a greener and healthier recovery – part of the grant was used to fund an adult behaviour change study, exploring barriers and enablers of active travel.
- The Let's Get Active Fund was set up with Greenham Trust - £33,600 was provided to local not-for-profits to improve access to physical activities where opportunities may be lacking and to prioritise activities that supported those most impacted by the pandemic.
- Members felt that it was important to recognise the role of Greenham Comon Trust in supporting programmes such as Surviving to Thriving and Let's Get Active.
- Even after the pandemic, some people were still worried about mixing with others and re-engaging with in-person exercise programmes, but online programmes were still available.
- It was recognised that there was still a need to build confidence amongst certain residents and this was being addressed through social prescribing and the Community Wellness Outreach Programme.

### ***Domestic Abuse***

- West Berkshire had not followed national trends of increased referrals for domestic abuse during the pandemic, but it was acknowledged that there was a risk that incidents had gone unreported.
- Multi-media campaigns had been run locally to encourage victims to seek help and to encourage neighbours to report concerns, and the Police had followed up on all reports. The aim of the campaigns was to drive up reporting, but also to provide support/make interventions so that victims did not need to make repeat reports.
- The Building Communities Together Partnership had worked with a wide range of sectors, including schools, young people, diverse ethnic communities, etc.
- Statistics showed that there had actually been an increase in reports of domestic abuse post-pandemic, with more/more serious incidents coming to



court, but it was not clear if this was due to better rates of reporting or an increase in the number of incidents.

- Domestic abuse was an area that the Task and Finish Group would have liked to explore further, but they were unable to do so, due to the relevant officer being unavailable to attend meetings.

### **Part 3 – Supporting Local Businesses**

4.8 This part of the review looked at the Council's role in relation to:

- Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to businesses
- Undertaking enforcement of Covid regulations
- Providing business rates relief
- Distributing grants
- Preventing fraud
- Undertaking checks / enforcement activity
- Advising on plans for local events
- Supporting economic recovery

4.9 Points of key learning were:

#### ***Information, Advice and Enforcement***

- The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) had responsibility for provision of information and advice to local businesses, as well as enforcement of Covid controls at retail levels.
- Engagement was achieved through a mixture of public information, online briefings, 1-1 advice, visits to individual premises and event monitoring.
- No penalty notices were issued, but there were significant volumes of activity across Environmental Health and Trading Standards functions.
- The PPP coordinated the Safety Advisory Group (used to discuss and advise on public safety at local events), and they also provided Licensing Liaison Officers and Covid Marshalls.
- Normal PPP functions were put on hold unless the situation was an emergency (e.g., food inspections), or were carried out in different ways (e.g., calls to farmers regarding animal welfare).

## ***Financial Support for Businesses***

- The Council was responsible for administration of 15 different grants to local businesses – over £53 million was paid out in over 9,000 payments.
- Key challenges were:
  - contacting all businesses
  - making the grant payments
  - dealing with conflicting and constantly changing advice from central government
  - preventing fraud
- The Council was relatively slow to start making payments while it obtained contact details for local businesses, but this approach was invaluable in helping to minimise fraud and we quickly caught up with other local authorities.
- Once contact details had been obtained, if businesses had qualified for the first round of a particular grant, then subsequent tranches were allocated automatically.
- Discretionary funding was provided to support businesses that had closed or were affected by Covid – £6.42 million was allocated to over 450 businesses were supported, including self-employed.
- Discretionary payments were equitable, fair and regular, but there were some groups that fell through the net (e.g., taxi drivers).
- It was difficult to decide which businesses to support and the policy was constantly reviewed and updated in response to comments received, but feedback was mostly positive.
- £85,000 of Council grants were given to help 20 small businesses reopen, funding outdoor space, seating, capacity, events and stalls – this was successful, but follow-up monitoring was essential.
- Business Rates Relief was provided for businesses in the sports/leisure, hospitality, and retail sectors, with £38 million of rates relief given in 2020/21 and £21.1 million in 2021/22 (Government continued to provide some relief post-Covid.)
- Other assistance provided included:
  - Payment holidays
  - Flexibility on rates repayments
  - Delayed enforcement action
- There were still some legacy impacts from the above relaxations.

- A 'Welcome Back Fund' was created using European Regional Development Fund to support the safe return to high streets and help build back better from the pandemic – this paid for a series of events, public realm projects and staff resources.
- £85,000 of grants were given to local businesses to help them reopen, paying for outdoor space, seating and events.
- The spotlight system as used on all payments and this was estimated to have saved £500,000 related to fraudulent claims.
- Discretionary schemes used an application process which included declarations to safeguard against fraud.
- An audit by the Department of Business, Industrial Strategy found no instance of fraud.
- The results of the Business Survey undertaken on behalf of the Task and Finish Group showed that respondents were generally satisfied with the support provided by the Council.
- The highest levels of satisfaction were related to provision of Covid related information and advice, while the lowest levels of satisfaction were related to support for developing event management plans and activities to support economic recovery, with evidence of conflicting advice on outdoor seating from different Council departments.
- Local business groups, such as Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, and Newbury Business Improvement District had acted as conduits, passing information to their members, but there was no equivalent organisation for rural businesses and communication had often been through local Ward Members or parish councils.
- Lessons learned by officers included:
  - The need to identify and allocate staffing resources for grant administration upfront rather than responsively.
  - The need to engage with other local authorities to share experiences, advice and ideas, since scheme varied significantly, which was confusing for businesses operating in more than one area – this may be a role for the new Berkshire Prosperity Board.
  - The need to achieve a balance between the simplicity of the grant application/allocation system vs the need to prevent fraud.

#### **Part 4 – Supporting the Education Sector**

4.10 This part of the review looked at the Council's role in relation to:

- Disseminating Covid related information and advice to schools

- Providing mental health support to staff and pupils
- Supporting the switch to online learning
- Responding to concerns about school attendance during and after the pandemic
- Assessing the impact on academic attainment
- Providing support to help pupils catch up on lost learning

4.11 Points of key learning were:

***Disseminating Covid Information and Advice***

- The Education Place Planning and Development Team provided Covid related information and advice to schools throughout the pandemic, including:
  - regular contact with schools via phone and email
  - interpretation of guidance and provision of advice to schools
  - created and updated guidance documents
  - created an Action Card for schools
  - worked with Public Health colleagues and UKHSA to provide advice and guidance
  - supported around 100 local authority maintained schools, academies and independent schools
  - created and maintained Education Portal pages with links to advice and guidance
  - attended Incident Management Team meetings with schools
  - advocated for schools at meetings and in discussions
  - attended regular meetings to provide updates and information on school cases
- There were just two officers in this team who provided support to schools seven days a week for 18 months, while also responding to service requests from schools and supporting other settings. (Similar scenarios were evident in other key roles across the Council.)
- Cases were monitored daily, and the team provided support/sought further information for each and every case.
- Headteachers found out about changes to government guidance at the same time as everyone else, so there was no time to digest and interpret it.

- Central guidance was general and intended for schools to interpret directly – officers put a lot of a lot of time and effort into tailoring the guidance for the individual circumstances of 17,000+ cases.
- Arrangements were simpler for primary schools, since pupils remained in the same class, while secondary schools had greater challenges with ‘bubble’ arrangements and movement of pupils around schools.
- The team set up case logging for schools, supported the move to Crest and transfer of data from existing records.
- Case logging had allowed issues with PCR testing at Newbury Showground to be highlighted.
- Initially, the focus for primary schools had been on supporting key workers and pressure on learning had reduced. In contrast, secondary schools had needed to put plans in place for key year groups (e.g., Y11 and Y13), and move quickly to remote learning.
- After final restrictions were lifted at Easter 2022, there was a spike in cases – it had been a balance between children’s health and education.
- The Headteacher Survey carried out by the Task and Finish Group highlighted that feedback was very positive in relation to Covid related advice, risk assessments and outbreak management.
- Lessons learned included:
  - The need to recruit temporary staff to provide additional cover for school support at the outset of any future pandemic.
  - The need to share knowledge and support activities more widely.
  - Adopt a Council-wide approach to case logging from the outset.
  - The situation created a lot of anxiety and additional pressure for headteachers.
  - The level of support to be offered to schools should be set out in local pandemic/influenza plans
  - It would be useful to undertake a formal review of the Covid arrangements implemented in secondary schools to understand what had/had not worked and learn from best practice.
  - The JEPU would benefit from having access to the documents and policies that schools had developed for remote learning, etc. This would allow templates to be created.

### ***Providing Mental Health Support***

- The results of the Headteacher Survey showed that satisfaction levels with mental health support offered to headteachers and staff during the pandemic were lower than for other services.

- The Council had provided signposting to online resources and there had been regular check-in emails from the Head of Education, with follow-up calls if he had any concerns, but without face-to-face contact, some problems may not have been picked up.
- Some insurance companies had provided schools with mental health support services during and after the pandemic.
- The Headteacher survey showed a mixed response to questions around mental health support offered to pupils/students and it was highlighted that CAMHS waiting lists were very long, with charities increasingly filling the gap.
- Mental health support was considered to be an area where comms from the Council had been relatively light.

### ***Supporting the Switch to Online Learning***

- Some schools adopted paper-based solutions rather than making the switch to online learning.
- There were challenges for families where children and adults needed access to computers for schooling and work, and Wi-Fi bandwidth had been an issue for some.
- Schools had taken advantage of funding to provide laptops for disadvantaged families, but there had been a mixed response from parents, with some laptops returned unused.
- Children had been engaged in task completion rather than learning.
- There had been very little Council support for schools to support learning, but schools could have sourced external support.
- Schools were signposted to online education resources, but teachers still had to put lesson plans together.
- Some schools had suffered due to low levels of investment in IT pre-Covid.
- There was no 'one size fits all' solution – smaller schools struggled to switch to online learning, and some had to draw upon the expertise of their governors to develop online learning solutions.
- The switch to online learning prompted an increased understanding and use of technology, particularly Teams – this had delivered legacy benefits post-pandemic (e.g., online parents' evenings).

### ***School Attendance***

- Consistent messaging was considered to be key to improving attendance during the pandemic.

- School attendance rates are still not back to pre-Covid levels and anxiety is thought to be a significant factor.
- The number of 'school refusers' has increased - this is more prevalent amongst female pupils/students, and there may be an autism link.
- The Headteachers Survey appeared to suggest that attendance rates at Special Needs Schools are more adversely affected
- Fines for parents would be introduced from September, but cases could take a year to get to court.
- Parents are still more likely to keep children off school with coughs/colds.
- Education Welfare budgets have been cut - EWOs used to work with parents to tackle absence issues, and some schools have since employed their own attendance officers.
- Attendance is now a bigger focus for Ofsted inspections.

### ***Academic Attainment / Making Up Lost Learning***

- A cohort of children has effectively lost several years of learning and poor attendance is compounding the issue.
- Around 1 in 4 children are not toilet trained by the time they started school.
- Pupils still exhibit low social and language skills, which could be linked to a lack of "communication opportunities" from a very young age, and headteachers are concerned that behaviour has become embedded.

### **Part 5 – Supporting the Care Sector**

4.12 This part of the review looked at the Council's role in relation to:

- Providing infection control training
- Distributing PPE
- Supporting hospital discharge
- Providing mental health support to staff and residents

### ***Infection Control / PPE / Hospital Discharge / Mental Health Support***

4.13 Points of key learning were:

- Support for the care sector was delivered through a partnership of Adult Social Care, Health partners, Public Health, Commissioning, Finance, the care sector, neighbouring authorities, regional networks and the Community Hub.

- The situation had constantly change, with frequent updates of government guidance.
- Visitor policy decisions sought to balance human rights vs risk to life.
- Factors considered in determining visitor policy included how vulnerable the resident was, outbreak status and whether the patient was at end of life.
- Bupa had stopped visits earlier than the Council – they had consulted with residents’ families first.
- The Council had sought to minimise movement of staff between settings, but agency staff had been an issue.
- PPE had been delivered directly to care homes – stocks of aprons and gloves were OK, but masks were a problem and there was confusion about the type of masks needed.
- Government had prioritised the discharge from hospitals to make space for Covid patients.
- There was some testing of patients, but often hospitals could not wait for the results and this drove infections in care homes – the Council could have refused to accept patients until they had been shown to test negative, but this would have placed additional pressures on the health system.
- Quarantining transferring patients would have been the only way to stop the spread of infections, but there were no suitable facilities.
- In the second wave, the Government had asked local authorities to designate settings to accept Covid positive patients, but West Berkshire Council had refused.
- Care staff had to be vaccinated, but some refused – a few were offered back-office jobs, but others had to leave.
- Specialist nurses provided infection control training to care settings.
- Facilitated Covid testing was provided to staff and service users.
- Care settings had to notify the authorities of any outbreaks and Council staff provided support and advice.
- Day centres were unable to operate during Covid so the Council provided some financial support.
- The Council also provided some additional support to carers.
- Local command structures worked well.



- An Adult Social Care Task Group and Care Home Group were set up, and a range of subject matter experts were identified to support the response to any outbreak and advise on infection controls.
- The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services provided a useful way of sharing experiences and best practice between local authorities.
- Larger private providers, such as Bupa, provided internal support and there was little interaction with West Berkshire Council. This was a missed opportunity in terms of sharing information and best practice.
- The Berkshire West Partnership included representation from the Integrated Care Board and NHS Foundation Trusts.
- In terms of care home infections and deaths, West Berkshire did not appear to be an outlier, with rates similar to neighbouring authorities.
- Death rates were often related to the type of residents catered for by a particular setting – patients at end of life were less resilient than younger, healthier patients.
- Statistics showed that West Berkshire performed poorly in terms of vaccination of under 65s in supported living, but the reasons for this were not clear. This group also tended to not come forward for flu vaccinations.
- Key strengths were considered to be:
  - Partnership working
  - Keeping day services viable
  - Processing requests for financial support and PPE
  - Management of national funding
  - Facilitating access to vaccination and testing
  - Disseminating national guidance
  - Supporting hospital discharge
  - Refusing to designate settings to accept Covid positive patients
  - Effective management
  - Vaccination rates (apart from under 65s in care)
  - Use of monitoring data to drive intelligence
  - Compliance with guidance
  - Contact with shielding individuals via the Hub.

- The following were identified as areas of weakness:
  - Provision of mental health support beyond the Council's own staff (but acknowledging that larger care providers had access to their own support)
  - Support for unpaid carers who had lost their domiciliary care providers during the pandemic.
  - Parents of adults with learning difficulties moving home from supported living had indicated that the WBC offer had fallen short – they were not contacted by the Hub, which was focused on shielding residents.
  - Local stocks of PPE were not sufficient to cover the initial few weeks – there had been an opportunity to learn from other countries affected before the UK and stock up.
  - Expenditure was not always the best use of public money – profiteering on PPE was widespread.

## 5. Recommendations

5.1 The Task and Finish Group has developed a set of recommendations as set out below, informed by the testimony of the witnesses and the evidence collected. The recommendations are not in any ranked order – all are considered important.

### ***Part 2a: Public Health and Emergency Community Support***

Ref	Recommendation	Lead
1	For the West Berkshire Chief Executive and his counterpart in the NHS, as a matter of urgency, to review the strengths and weaknesses in communications between the two organisations during the pandemic and identify improvements or where better practice is needed.	WBC Chief Executive / ICB Chief Executive
2	Do more to open channels of communication with key groups through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Building and maintaining a social media cascade to improve the reach of pandemic related communications and engagement of partners, particularly town/parish councils and local community groups.</li> <li>b) Using Community Champions to improve engagement with seldom heard communities, assist with communication of key messaging, and provide feedback about concerns within those communities.</li> </ul>	Comms / Public Health/ Building Communities Together / Business Development Team

	c) Building and maintaining a database of rural businesses in order to improve communications in the event of a future pandemic.	
3	Provide regular hardcopy updates to cater for those residents who are not digitally enabled.	Comms
4	Review HR processes for sourcing additional staff resources during a pandemic with a focus on minimising delays.	HR
5	Review in more detail the use of Crest (or similar) for case logging from the outset of any future pandemics/other emergencies and consider greater use of Power BI and/or AI tools to help map virus transmission/outbreaks	All Services

### ***Part 2b – Emergency Community Support***

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
6	Consider how the voluntary sector could best be involved in the command structure for future pandemic events or other emergencies.	Corporate Leadership Team
7	Ensure that all relevant emergency processes (including those developed by schools) are collated within a single repository and kept under review.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit

### ***Part 3 Supporting Local Businesses***

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
8	Seek to harmonise discretionary funding schemes with other Berkshire local authorities with support from the Berkshire Prosperity Board, ensuring that any gaps in coverage (e.g., taxi drivers) are addressed in future schemes.  Also, seek to identify and allocate staffing resources for grant administration in advance rather than reactively.	Finance / Economic Development Team/ Corporate Leadership Team
9	Contact the other Berkshire local authorities to ask if they have undertaken a similar post-Covid review and if they would be willing to share their findings.	Emergency Planning
10	Review emergency plans to ensure that a structure can be put in place quickly to ensure that all relevant services coordinate to provide a single set of definitive advice about any temporary measures to support recovery (e.g., outdoor seating for pubs, cafés, and restaurants), taking a pragmatic approach wherever possible.	Licensing / Highways / Public Health/ Emergency Planning

### **Part 4 - Supporting the Education Sector**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
11	Recruit temporary staff to provide additional cover for school support at the outset of any future pandemic – the level of support should be defined in future updates to pandemic/influenza plans.	Corporate Leadership Team / Education
12	Undertake a formal review to understand what measures were/were not effective for secondary schools (e.g. 'bubble' arrangements and movement of pupils around schools) to ensure that schools learn from best practice.	Education
13	Review the mental health support available to headteachers and school staff and, if necessary, identify what can be done to bolster the support.	Education
14	Ensure that sufficient education welfare resources are provided to secure full attendance at schools.	Education

### **Part 5 - Supporting the Care Sector**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead</b>
15	Consider what support unpaid carers might need during a pandemic/ other emergency and put a suitable plan together.	Adult Social Care
16	Review PPE policies to ensure that adequate stocks are held to meet local demand for an initial period (at least 4 weeks) while national supply systems are set up.	Joint Emergency Planning Unit
17	Challenge government guidance where it is not in the best interest of residents (e.g., discharge of patients from hospitals to care homes).	Corporate Leadership Team
18	Consider how the Council and care sector organisations could provide better peer support, sharing intelligence and best practice, and make provision for this within pandemic/influenza/emergency plans.	Adult Social Care
19	Develop a wider list of people who may need support to include parents/carers of adults with learning difficulties to be added to the Hub's contact list.	Adult Social Care/ PPP

# Appendix A: Terms of Reference

## Overview and Scrutiny Review Matrix

**Review Topic: Covid and Recovery**

**Timescale**

**Start: September 2023**

**Finish: February 2024**

### Review Rationale:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission has agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at lessons learned from the local response to Covid and the subsequent recovery. This will consider the perspectives of residents, service users and businesses.

The scope of the review will include:

- Local resilience and preparedness for the pandemic
- The Council's role in delivering public health and emergency support
- The Council's role in supporting local businesses
- The Council's role in supporting the education sector
- The Council's role in supporting the care sector

The scope specifically excludes the response at the national level.

### Terms of Reference:

The Task and Finish Group will consider the following:

- **Part 1:** Resilience and Preparedness for the Pandemic

*The Council's risk management and emergency planning, and general preparedness for a pandemic, including structures, governance, processes and protocols, as well as local stocks of personal protective equipment.*

- **Part 2:** Public Health and Emergency Community Support

*The Council's role in relation to:*

- *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to residents*
- *Identification and containment of local outbreaks*
- *Supporting the local vaccination programme*
- *Implementing the test and trace system*
- *Identifying vulnerable residents*
- *Delivering practical support to residents*

- *Safeguarding and providing support for victims of domestic abuse*
- *Addressing issues of loneliness and social isolation and providing mental health support*
- *Provision of voluntary sector support*

- **Part 3: Supporting Local Businesses**

*The Council's role in relation to:*

- *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to businesses*
- *Undertaking enforcement of Covid regulations*
- *Providing business rates relief*
- *Distributing grants*
- *Preventing fraud*
- *Undertaking checks / enforcement activity*
- *Advising on plans for local events*
- *Supporting economic recovery*

- **Part 4: Supporting the Education Sector**

*The Council's role in relation to:*

- *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to schools*
- *Providing mental health support to staff and pupils*
- *Supporting the switch to online learning*
- *Responding to concerns about school attendance during and after the pandemic*
- *Assessing the impact on academic attainment*
- *Providing support to help pupils catch up on lost learning*

- **Part 5: Supporting the Care Sector**

*The Council's role in relation to:*

- *Providing infection control training*
- *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to children's homes, care homes, and domiciliary care staff*
- *Distributing PPE*
- *Supporting hospital discharge*
- *Providing mental health support to staff and residents*
- *Providing support to help isolated residents reintegrate*

**Review Membership:**

Cllr Carlyne Culver  
 Cllr Patrick Clark\*  
 Cllr Paul Dick  
 Cllr Paul Kander  
 Cllr Erik Pattenden

**Chairman:** Cllr Paul Dick

**Scrutiny Officer:** Gordon Oliver

**Information Required:**

Governance arrangements

Information flows and blockers  
Provision of advice, guidance, practical support and financial support  
Effectiveness of measures implemented  
Lessons learned and changes put in place  
Experience of residents, businesses and service users

**Documents/Evidence:**

Residents Surveys  
Covid Community Support Hub Evaluation Report  
Berkshire Observatory Recovery Report

**Witnesses:**

Chief Executive  
Interim Executive Director – People  
Executive Director - Resources  
Acting Service Director - Communities and Wellbeing  
Acting Service Director – Adult Social Care  
Economy Manager  
Acting Head of Children and Family Services  
Emergency Planning Manager  
Public Protection Manager  
Economy Team  
Town / Parish Councils  
Chris Boulton (Greenham Trust)  
Garry Poulson (Volunteer Centre West Berkshire)  
James Wilcox (Fair Close)

**Metrics:**

Levels of PPE  
Covid infections (vs Berkshire and England)  
Number of outbreaks  
Number of care home deaths  
Excess deaths during the pandemic  
GCSE and A-Level grades  
Demand and waiting lists for CAMHS  
Number of furlough scheme payments processed  
Number of business support grants processed  
Number of business closures / new businesses created  
Town centre footfall

**Desired Outcomes:**

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

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# Agenda Item 11.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Review Matrix**

**Review Topic:** Sports Hub

**Timescale**

**Start: October 2024**

**Finish: January 2025**

### **Review Rationale:**

To determine whether there was a strategically and financially sound business case for the Sports Hub, and whether reliable and consistent advice was given to members about the project to assist them in their decision-making roles.

### **Terms of Reference:**

To determine whether the Sports Hub project was value for money.

To determine whether the project would have delivered on the council's strategic objectives.

To determine whether the project was well managed.

To determine whether reliable and consistent advice was given to members about the project to assist them in their decision-making roles.

To determine whether the council's decision to abandon the project in its original form was a strategically and financially sound decision.

To establish whether the council intends to deliver any elements of the original project at Monks Lane (bearing in mind planning permission remains and project funds are being carried forward).

To determine what lessons can be learned from this project.

### **Review Membership:**

Councillor Carlyne Culver  
Councillor Jeremy Cottam  
Councillor Paul Dick  
Councillor David Marsh  
Councillor Chris Read

**Chairman: Councillor Carlyne Culver**

**Scrutiny Officer: Gordon Oliver**

### **Information Required**

#### **Documents/Evidence:**

Sports Hub business case and all associated costs  
Playing Pitch Strategy including Stage E Review 2022 and documentation relating to the planned 2024 review  
Sports Hub planning application and associated papers  
Western Area Planning Committee agenda pack (15 December 2021)  
Executive decision 4149 (16 December 2021)

District Planning Committee agenda pack (2 March 2022)  
WBC 'Defendant's Detailed Grounds of Resistance' presented to the High Court (22 September 2022)  
Executive decision 4332 (23 March 2023)  
LRIE task and finish group final report presented to OSMC (as Scrutiny Commission was formerly known) on 28 July 2020

**Witnesses:**

*Internal*

Councillor Howard Woollaston, former Executive Member for Internal Governance Leisure & Culture  
Councillor Nigel Foot, current Executive Member for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside  
Shannon Colman-Slaughter, Service Director – Finance and Property  
Matt Pearce, Former Service Director – Communities & Wellbeing  
April Peberdy, Service Director - Communities  
Sarah Clarke, Solicitor – Service Director, Strategy & Governance  
Simon Till, Team Leader (Development Control), Development & Regulation

*External*

Sport England  
Newbury Community Football Group  
Alan Pearce  
Paul Morgan  
Newbury Rugby Club  
Lynne Doherty, former Leader of WBC  
Consultants who worked on the project who have since left WBC – acknowledging that they would not be obliged to attend to give evidence

**Measures Available**

**Desired Outcomes:**

To meet the objectives outlined in the terms of reference and produce a document of findings for Scrutiny Commission.

## Overview and Scrutiny Review Matrix

**Review Topic:** Project Management

**Timescale**  
**Start: TBC**  
**Finish: TBC**

### Review Rationale:

The Scrutiny Commission has agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to review the Council's approach to managing major projects and identify lessons to be learned from recent projects, including Care Director 6, iTrent, and Faraday Road Football Ground.

The scope of the review will include:

- Contract management
- Project management structure
- Project management methodology
- Resourcing
- Project governance
- Reasons for project failure
- Lessons learned, changes to processes

### Terms of Reference:

The Task and finish Group will consider the following:

- **Session 1 – How we manage projects in West Berkshire Council**
  - Project management structure
  - Project management resources
  - Project management training
  - Project management methodology and scalability
  - Project governance arrangements
  - Common reasons for project failure
  - Learning lessons, reviewing processes, and communicating change
  - Contract management / procurement timetables
  - Off-boarding for expiring contracts
  - Legal challenges
- **Sessions 2 and 3 – Care Director 6**
  - Governance arrangements
  - Project Board agendas and minutes
  - Audit of Care Director 5
  - Business case / continual business justification
  - Objectives
  - Budget
  - Timescales
  - Quality plans
  - Risk and impact assessment
  - Options appraisal
  - Delivery planning
  - Consultation and engagement
  - Procurement process

- Delivery partner
- Project management
- Management of resources
- Assumptions and dependencies
- Risk management
- Issue management
- Change control (including escalations / exceptions)
- Stakeholder management and communications
- Stage reviews
- Testing (including results and remediation)
- Project review
- Lessons learned
- Current status

● **Session 4 and 5 – iTrent (Phase 1)**

- Governance arrangements
- Project Board agendas and minutes
- Business case
- Objectives
- Budget
- Timescales
- Quality plan
- Risk and impact assessment
- Options appraisal
- Delivery planning
- Consultation and engagement
- Procurement
- Project management
- Management of resources
- Assumptions and dependencies
- Risk management
- Issue management
- Change control (including escalations / exceptions)
- Stakeholder management and communications
- Stage reviews
- Testing (including results and remediation)
- Project review
- Lessons learned
- Current status

● **Session 5 – Draft Report**

**Review Membership:**

Councillor Chris Read  
Councillor  
Councillor  
Councillor

**Chairman:**

**Scrutiny Officer:** Gordon Oliver

**Senior Manager:**

**Information Required:**

Project management methodology  
Structure chart  
Training plans  
Project management resources (including templates)  
Issues arising  
Lessons learned

**Documents/Evidence:**

Project mandates  
Project proposals  
Business cases  
PIDs  
Project plans  
Risk and issues logs  
Lessons learned reports  
Examples of Project Board agendas, minutes, etc  
Relevant audit reports(?)

**Witnesses:**

## Session 1:

- Melanie Best (Service Lead - Customer Engagement & Transformation)
- Anita Stanbury (Acting Transformation and Programme Manager)
- Kate Pearson (Service Lead – Procurement and Commissioning)
- Dawn Bond (Legal Services Manager)

## Sessions 2 and 3:

- Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care)
- Jo England (Service Lead – Adult Social Care)
- Rich Pask (Business Manager – Adult Social Care)
- Kate Toone (Project Manager – Integration and Quality)
- Sarah Clarke (Service Director – Strategy, ICT & Governance)
- Andy Best (Acting Head of IT)
- Mat Scalpello (Applications Development Manager)
- Rob Sweetman (Systems Team Leader)
- Phil Cridge (Systems Integration Officer)

## Sessions 4 and 5:

- Sarah Clarke (Service Director – Strategy, ICT & Governance)
- Paula Goodwin (Service Lead – Human Resources)
- Rich Strange (Project and Programme Manager)
- Kate Pearson (Service Lead – Procurement and Commissioning)
- Lorraine Collins (HR Systems and Data Manager)
- Julie Gillhespey (Audit Manager)

**Measures Available**

- Project spend vs budget
- Project delivery timescale vs original plan
- Resources allocated vs original plan

**Desired Outcomes:**

Members will identify lessons to be learned about how project management can be improved so these can be applied to future project. The Task and Finish Group will make recommendations in a report to the Scrutiny Commission. If approved, the recommendations will then go to Executive for consideration.

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Scrutiny Commission – 24 September 2024

## **Item 12 – Health Scrutiny Update**

Verbal Item

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# WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN 1 SEPTEMBER 2024 - 31 DECEMBER 2024

## The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

1. This document gives 28 clear days notice of key decisions which the Executive and Individual Executive Members or Officer expect to take.
2. The document is updated as required and is available to the public on the Council's website.
3. The Executive is made up of the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader and eight Executive Members with the following portfolios:

Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategy and Communications	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Planning and Housing	Councillor Denise Gaines
Finance and Resources	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Economic Development and Regeneration	Councillor Louise Sturgess
Adult Social Care and Public Health	Councillor Patrick Clark
Children and Family Services	Councillor Heather Codling
Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside	Councillor Nigel Foot
Environment and Highways	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Executive Member for Transformation and Corporate Programme	Councillor Vicky Poole
Public Safety and Community Engagement	Councillor Justin Pemberton

4. Key decisions are those executive decisions which are likely to result in spending or savings which are "significant" in relation to the budget for the service or function in question, or in terms of the effect on communities living or working in two or more wards or electoral divisions. All contracts above £500,000 require a key decision in accordance with the Constitution.
5. The Regulations and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in this document in accordance with General Exception and Special Urgency provisions.

6. The Forward Plan will also contain details of intended review activity by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and its Sub-Committee(s) or another body e.g. Task Group associated with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
7. Copies of the Council's Constitution and agenda and minutes for all meetings of the Council may be accessed on the Council's website.
8. For copies of reports or other documents, and for detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Executive, individual Member or officer please contact the named Lead Officer for the item concerned.
9. For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please email [executivecycle@westberkshire.gov.uk](mailto:executivecycle@westberkshire.gov.uk) or by writing to the address below.

Publication Date: 1 September 2024

Nicola Thomas  
Service Lead  
Legal & Democratic Services  
West Berkshire Council, Council Offices  
Market Street  
Newbury  
RG14 5LD

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
20 Aug 2024	Parking Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) 2024 Off-street Parking	<p>To make decision on whether following the consultation(s) on off-street and on-street car parking and Newbury Wharf bus station, the orders for parking can be approved.</p> <p>At Full Council on 29 February 2024, the decision was made to introduce new parking fees and charges for 2024/25.</p> <p>To introduce these charges a formal Traffic Regulation Order is required and a period of consultation to take place. If any comments</p>	No	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Emma Jameson	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		or objections are received it is necessary for a formal decision to be made on approving the orders.						
19 Sep 2024	Waste Strategy		Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
19 Sep 2024	2023/24 Performance Report Quarter Four	To highlight successes and where performance has fallen below the expected level, to present information on the remedial action taken, and the impact of that action.	Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
19 Sep 2024	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2024/25	To inform Members of the latest financial performance of	Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		the Council.						
19 Sep 2024	Capital Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2024/25	To present the Q1 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
19 Sep 2024	Future of Turnham's Green		No	Executive			Gabrielle Mancini	Open
19 Sep 2024	Customer Charter	To review and update the Council's customer charter.	No	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open
19 Sep 2024	2024/25 Performance Report Q1		Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
19 Sep 2024	Options for Shaw House		No	Executive			Gabrielle Mancini	Open
19 Sep 2024	Domestic Abuse Strategy 2023-27		Yes	Executive			Jade Wilder	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
19 Sep 2024	Carers Strategy	The strategy is a key document in setting out how the council will support carers in the district.	No	Executive			Hannah Cole	Open
27 Sep 2024	Parking Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) 2024: On-Street Parking	To make a decision on whether, following consultation on on-street parking, an Order Amendment for parking can be approved. At Full Council on 29 February 2024, the decision was made to introduce new parking fees and charges for 2024/25. To introduce these charges a formal Traffic Regulation	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Ian Martinez	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		Order is required and a period of consultation to take place. If any comments or objections are received it is necessary for a formal decision to be taken on approving the order or order amendment						
11 Oct 2024	Winter Service Plan 2024/25	To approve the Winter Service Plan 2024/25	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Andrew Reynolds	Open
	Household support fund	To agree the allocations of the fund.	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Planning and Housing			Nick Caprara	Open
31 Oct 2024	Arboriculture Contract	To approve the appointment of a new arboriculture contractor for the period 2024-2029	Yes	Clare Lawrence - Executive Director			Paul Hendry	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
7 Nov 2024	Care Homes Contract Award		Yes	Executive			Gabrielle Mancini	Open
7 Nov 2024	Risk Management Strategy 2024-2027	To set out the overarching framework for managing risk at the Council, the Council's risk appetite and the risk management objectives for the next three years.	Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
7 Nov 2024	Local Authority Designated Officer Report		Yes	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open
7 Nov 2024	Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report		Yes	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open
7 Nov 2024	Children and Families Safeguarding Annual Report		Yes	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open



Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
7 Nov 2024	Shaw House Options		No	Executive			Gabrielle Mancini	Open
7 Nov 2024	Adults Homelessness	Contract Award	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Braithwaite	Open
7 Nov 2024	Waste Contract Paper		Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
7 Nov 2024	Wraparound Care	To inform Executive about the Wraparound Care Programme and the West Berkshire strategy for the delivery of this DFE programme	No	Executive			Kate Parietti	Open
7 Nov 2024	Garden Waste Charging Options		Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
7 Nov 2024	Procurement activity annual	To inform the Executive of	Yes	Executive			Kate Pearson	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	report	the procurements undertaken by the Council over the past 12 months and the impact of the Social Value procurement policy.						
7 Nov 2024	Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2025-26 planning	To inform members of the latest financial planning assumptions and implications for future financial years	No	Executive			Joseph Holmes	Open
7 Nov 2024	Youth Justice Plan		Yes	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open
12 Dec 2024	Capital Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2024/25	To present the Q2 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
12 Dec 2024	Contracts for	To gain	Yes	Executive			Liz Martin	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive	approval from Executive to delegate authority to an individual (Service Lead or Service Director) to proceed with contract awards with a value in excess of £2.5M						
12 Dec 2024	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2024/25		Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open
12 Dec 2024	2024/25 Performance Report Q2		Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
13 Feb 2025	Corporate Accommodation Review		Yes	Executive			Gabrielle Mancini	Open
13 Feb 2025	Capital Financial Performance	To present the Q3 capital financial	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Report - Q3 of 2024/25	performance for Members to note.						
13 Feb 2025	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2024/25	To inform Members of the latest financial performance of the Council.	Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open
27 Mar 2025	Future of the Shared Partnership for the Public Protection Partnership	To fulfil the requirement of the IAA which is due to expire in January 2027, which requires the partner authorities to review the current arrangements and adopt any changes 2 years before the current arrangement expires.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
22 May 2025	2024/25 Performance Report Q3		Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Leisure Strategy Delivery Plan	To present the plan for implementing the Leisure Strategy.	Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan	To present the revised plan following public consultation.	Yes	Executive			Elaine Cox	Open
	Joint Legal team (JLT) Review	To agree a revised Heads of Term Agreement and to delegate authority to the Service Lead, Legal and Democratic Services to finalise the same.	Yes	Executive			Nicola Thomas	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) Information which reveals that the authority proposes to give under any

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
								enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment.
	Gateway Plaza update		No	Executive			Sam Robins	Open
	LRIE lease acquisitions	To seek Executive sign-off to make an offer to buy-back the leases on plots 13U and 13T on the LRIE, subject to a satisfactory price being	Yes	Executive			Sam Robins	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		agreed at negotiations which are currently underway with the leaseholders on the sites.						
	Review of Libraries Service	To evaluate the impact of the transformation of the library service which took place in 2017-18 and put forward any additional options for improving the service for residents.	Yes	Executive	Community Needs Assessment Stakeholder Surveys – volunteers, staff, service managers, hard to reach groups Public Survey including library users and non-users Parish and Town Council engagement sessions		Felicity Harrison	Open
	Parking Strategy 2023-2033	To consider and approve the West Berkshire	Yes	Executive			Ian Martinez	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		Council Parking Strategy 2023-2033.						
	A4 Bath Road, Calcot Bus Priority Measures Public Consultation	To make decision on whether a consultation about proposals for installing bus priority measures along the A4 Bath Road in Calcot (from the junction with the M4 to the West Berkshire boundary with Reading Borough) can proceed during the summer/early autumn of 2024.	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Emma Jameson	Open
	Contract Award report for West Point	Contract value estimated to be £990k therefore included on the	No	Joseph Holmes - Executive			Vickie Collins	Open



Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	House Refurbishment Project	Forward Plan for information		Director				
	Kennet Valley Primary School SEMH Provision	Contract award report for the Kennet Valley expansion works following a full tender process. Contract value estimated at £1.8 million	Yes	Paul Coe - Executive Director			Vicky Pearce	Open
	Contract Award report for Mrs Blands Infant and Nursery School Heating Replacement	Contract award report for heating replacement works at Mrs Blands School following a full tender process. Contract value estimated at £500k.	Yes	AnnMarie Dodds - Executive Director			Vicky Pearce	Open

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## Scrutiny Commission Work Programme

The following items will be considered as standing items: Capital and Revenue Financial Performance Reports (Quarterly), and Performance Report (Annually)






Last Updated:  
13 September  
2024

Item	Scrutiny Theme	Purpose	Lead Officer	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member	Pre or post decision?
<b>17 October 2024 (Special)</b>					
Thames Water	<i>Partnership Effectiveness</i>	To understand how Thames Water is upgrading its water supply and foul water networks to support planned development and pollution incidents in West Berkshire and how the Environment Agency is holding the water company to account.	Karen Nelson (Thames Water) Dave Willis (Environment Agency)	N/A	Scrutiny Commission Decision
Section 19 Water Act Report on 2024 Flooding	<i>Partnership Effectiveness</i>	To review the findings of the report and understand lessons learned in terms of flood alleviation and river management authorities.	Jon Winstanley / Paul Bacchus	Cllr Stuart Gourley (Environment and Highways)	Pre-Decision
2024 Flood Investigation Report	<i>Partnership Effectiveness</i>	Investigation into the causes, mechanisms, consequences and responses associated with flooding in each of the affected areas within West Berkshire.	Carolyn Richardson	Cllr Stuart Gourley (Environment and Highways)	Pre-Decision
<b>26 November 2024</b>					
Attainment of Children on Free School Meals	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the reasons for the persistent gap in attainment between those on free school meals and other children living in West Berkshire and the measures to address this.	AnnMarie Dodds / Rose Carberry(?)	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	Scrutiny Commission Decision
Budget Headlines	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the emerging draft budget, budget consultation and expected government settlement.	Joseph Holmes	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Revenue Performance Report Q2 2023/24	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Capital Financing Performance Report Q2 2023/24	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	Reports on the under or over spends against the Council's approved capital budget.	Joseph Holmes / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
<b>11 February 2025 (Budget Scrutiny)</b>					

	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2025/26	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To consolidate the investments and borrowing strategy for the year ahead by detailing how and where the Council will invest and borrow in the forthcoming year, within a particular framework. This strategy is monitored throughout the year, with a mid-year report going to the Government and Ethics Committee as well as an annual report being presented to Members.	Joseph Holmes	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-Decision
	Medium Term Financial Strategy	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To set out the financial planning assumptions for future years and how these align these with the Council Strategy to ensure that the Council Strategy will be delivered. The MTFs highlights the overarching key issues facing the Council's finances as well as how there are many different scenarios and uncertainty concerning the future revenue streams for the Council in the future.	Joseph Holmes	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-Decision
	Capital Strategy. Financial Years 2025/26 to 2034/35	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To outline the Capital Strategy covering financial years 2025/26 to 2034/35 and the supporting funding framework, providing a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.	Joseph Holmes/ Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-Decision
	Revenue Budget 2025/26	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the budget proposals for the year ahead that form the basis of the 2024-25 revenue budget and detail the respective Council Tax proposals and resolutions.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-Decision
	Revenue Performance Report Q3 2023/24	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
	Capital Financing Performance Report Q3 2023/24	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	Reports on the under or over spends against the Council's approved capital budget.	Joseph Holmes / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
<b>13 March 2025</b>						
	Review of SEND and the High Needs Block	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To receive an update on spend and transformation activity in this area	AnnMarie Dodds	Children, Education and Young People's Services	Scrutiny Commission Decision
	Libraries Service	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the performance of the Libraries Service and its funding model.	April Peberdy / Felicity Harrison	Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside	Scrutiny Commission Decision

	Housing Task & Finish Group Terms of Reference	<i>Partnership Effectiveness</i>	To agree the terms of reference for the Housing Task and Finish Group.	Gordon Oliver	N/A	Scrutiny Commission Decision
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**Council Strategy Priorities**

-  Services We Are Proud Of
-  A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All
-  Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency
-  A Prosperous and Resilient West Berkshire
-  Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice

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