

Meeting of West Berkshire District Council

Thursday 17 July 2025

Summons and Agenda



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

To: All Members of the Council

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

on
Thursday 17 July 2025
at 7.00 pm



Sarah Clarke
Interim Executive Director – Resources
West Berkshire District Council

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 9 July 2025

AGENDA

Part I

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any). **(Pages 5 - 6)**

2. **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman to report on functions attended since the last meeting and other matters of interest to Members. **(Pages 7 - 8)**

3. **MINUTES**

The Chairman to sign as correct records the Minutes of the Council meetings held on 15 May 2025 and 10 June 2025. **(Pages 9 - 24)**



WestBerkshire
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Agenda - Council to be held on Thursday 17 July 2025 (continued)

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' [Code of Conduct](#). **(Pages 25 - 26)**

5. PETITIONS

Petitions may be presented to Council. These will normally be referred to the appropriate body without discussion. **(Pages 27 - 28)**

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the [Council's Constitution](#). **(Pages 29 - 30)**

7. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

The Council to agree any changes to the membership of Committees. **(Pages 31 - 32)**

8. MOTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

To note Motions which had been presented to a previous Council meeting. **(Pages 33 - 34)**

9. UPDATES FROM COMMITTEES

That Council is informed about the meetings held since the last ordinary meeting of Council. The minutes of these meetings will be available on the [Council's website](#). **(Pages 35- 36)**

- A) The Licensing Committee met on 7 July 2025
- B) The Personnel Committee met on 15 July 2025.
- C) The Governance Committee has not met.
- D) The District Planning Committee met on 16 July 2025.
- E) The Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee met on 1 July 2025.
- F) The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee met on 5 June 2025.
- G) The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee met on 12 June 2025.
- H) The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 10 July 2025.
- I) The Joint Public Protection Committee met on 9 June 2025.

10. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 4

Purpose: To present the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) for adoption. It is a statutory requirement that, as the Local Transport Authority, West Berkshire Council has a Local Transport Plan. This plan will cover the period 2025-2040. **(Pages 37 - 90)**

11. MONITORING OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25 - CONDUCT AND ETHICS

Purpose: To provide the annual report on matters relating to standards and conduct and to bring to the attention of Members a summary of complaints or other problems within West Berkshire. The report highlights that standards of conduct by councillors in West Berkshire remains high. **(Pages 91 - 100)**

12. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Purpose: The Annual Report provides a summary of the work of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board in 2024/25. It outlines progress made in working towards the strategic objectives of the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Berkshire West and implementation of the Delivery Plan for West Berkshire. It demonstrates how the Board has continued to assess the health needs of the local population. It also shows how the Board has sought to improve integration of Health and Social Care through the Better Care Fund. **(Pages 101 - 124)**

13. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2024/25

Purpose: The Annual Scrutiny report for 2024/25 provides a summary of the work of the Scrutiny Commission, and Health Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. **(Pages 125 - 144)**

14. NOTICES OF MOTION

To receive any Motions submitted in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the [Council's Constitution](#). **(Pages 145 - 146)**

15. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by Members of the Council in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the [Council's Constitution](#). **(Pages 147 - 148)**

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Darius Zarazel on telephone 01635 519778.

Council – 17 July 2025

Item 1 – Apologies for Absence

Verbal Item

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 2 – Chairman's Remarks

Verbal Item

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

ANNUAL COUNCIL**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON****THURSDAY 15 MAY 2025**

Councillors Present: Billy Drummond (Chairman), Tony Vickers (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Antony Amirtharaj, Phil Barnett, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Jeff Brooks, Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Martin Colston, Jeremy Cottam, Iain Cottingham, Laura Coyle, Carolyne Culver, Paul Dick, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Clive Hooker, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, Janine Lewis, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Tom McCann, Biyi Oloko, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Christopher Read, Matt Shakespeare, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor, Martha Vickers, and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Sarah Clarke (Monitoring Officer and Interim Executive Director for Resources), Paul Coe (Executive Director – Adult Social Care), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director - Children's Services), Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), Jon Winstanley (Service Director for Environment), Melanie Booth (Group Executive – Liberal Democrats), Jake Carpenter (Group Executive – Conservatives), Sam Chiverton (Zoom Host), Darius Zarazel (Principal Democratic Services Officer), Honorary Alderman Paul Bryant, Honorary Alderman Tony Linden, Honorary Alderman Graham Pask

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:

Councillor Stephanie Steevenson, Councillor Nick Carter, Councillor Vicky Poole, Honorary Alderman Hilary Cole, Honorary Alderman Emma Webster, Honorary Alderman Mollie Lock, Honorary Alderman Graham Bridgman, and Honorary Alderman Rick Jones

PART I**1. Chairman's Remarks**

The Chairman reflected on his year in office, indicating that he had attended 112 engagements during his term. Some of those events and duties which he highlighted included numerous citizenship ceremonies, which he urged Members to attend, the 80-year anniversary of VE day, remembrance services, both the Newbury and Thatcham Mayor Making ceremonies, the swearing in ceremony for the High Sheriff of Berkshire, consecration of the Bishop of Reading, and famously the unveiling of Paddington Bear.

The Chairman also extended his heartfelt thanks to the Vice-Chairman and Vice-Chairman's Consort for their support during his term as well as the former Chairman, Councillor Jeremy Cottam, for standing in when requested. In addition, the Chairman expressed his gratitude to Melanie Booth, Group Executive - Liberal Democrats, Ben Ryan, Democratic Services Officer, and Darius Zarazel, Principal Democratic Services Officer, for their support.

Overall, the Chairman emphasised that he was extremely grateful for the opportunity that had been afforded to him and that he would always remember his time as Chairman.

The Vice-Chairman also spoke about his year in office, highlighting his attendance at several appointments, and thanked the Chairman for his diligent work during 2024/25.

COUNCIL - 15 MAY 2025 - MINUTES

2. **Presentations**

The Chairman made presentations to Mrs Sharon Drummond, the Chairman's Consort for the year 2024/25.

3. **Election of the Chairman for the Municipal Year 2025/26**

Council considered the election of Chairman for the Municipal Year 2025/26. Councillor Denise Gaines nominated Councillor Tony Vickers to the position of Chairman, which was seconded by Councillor Nigel Foot. There were no further nominations received.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Denise Gaines and seconded by Councillor Nigel Foot: "That Councillor Tony Vickers be elected as Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2025/26."

The proposer and seconder spoke in support of their nomination. Councillor Gaines informed Council that Councillor Vickers had been a member of the Liberal Democrats since he was in sixth form. Having spent 20 years serving in the armed forces and specialising in the Royal Engineers Survey Branch, he settled in Newbury in 1987. After retiring in 1995, Councillor Vickers was elected to the Council from the Kintbury Ward. Due to his demonstrable knowledge, expertise, and work he had done as a Member of the Council, Councillor Gaines strongly recommended Councillor Vickers to the position of Chairman.

In addition, Councillor Foot highlighted the support that Councillor Vickers would receive from his wife, Councillor Martha Vickers, and also recommended Councillor Vickers' appointment to Chairman. Noting Councillor Vickers' theme, Councillor Foot welcomed his focus on the preservation and enhancing of the natural environment, sustainability in development, and providing faith in a better future. For these reasons, he seconded the nomination of Councillor Vickers as Chairman of West Berkshire Council.

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

Councillor Vickers (The Chairman) read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Chairman thanked all Members for their support and declared that it was an honour to be elected Chairman. He noted that, although remaining a Liberal Democrat, the position of Chairman was not party political and that in the spirit of the words on the Council's Coat of Arms, he would take the district 'Forward Together'.

The Chairman outlined his theme for the year, 'faith in our future'. Being keen to showcase deserving activities that were being done across the district, the Chairman welcomed invitations from Members, Council partners, and others, to promote worthy causes.

He also indicated that he would like to visit every parish in the district, celebrate excellence in new building design through a new award scheme, and promote his chosen charity, Good Hope Farm. This charity allowed young adults with special needs to enjoy outdoor activities and also helped the volunteers on the farm work through mental health conditions.

4. **Election of the Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2025/26**

Council considered the election of Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2025/26. The Chairman nominated Councillor Stephanie Steevenson to the position of Vice-Chairman, which was seconded by Councillor Owen Jeffery. There were no further nominations received.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Tony Vickers and seconded by Councillor Owen Jeffery:

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"That Councillor Stephanie Steevenson be elected as Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2025/26."

The proposer and seconder spoke in support of their nomination. The Chairman informed Council that Councillor Steevenson was acting as a local representative of the Thatcham Royal British Legion at their national conference and so had issued her apologies for the meeting. Having spent many years in the armed forces, Councillor Steevenson had continued to be involved in uniformed organisations since her retirement and was currently the Armed Forces Champion at the Council and was a representative on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel. She had also been a volunteer for Berkshire Guides and had been a teacher for special educational needs and disability (SEND) children for a number of years. Due to her passion and commitment, the Chairman was happy to nominate Councillor Steevenson to the position of Vice-Chairman of West Berkshire Council.

In seconding this nomination, Councillor Jeffery noted that Councillor Steevenson had been a commendable Mayor of Thatcham, getting involved with those who often felt left behind or ignored. He hoped to see Councillor Steevenson continue to be fair, even-handed, and assiduous during her time as Vice-Chairman.

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

As Councillor Steevenson had issued her apologies for the meeting, Council noted that she would read and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as soon as practicable after the meeting.

At this point, Councillor Billy Drummond left the meeting.

5. Minutes

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Tony Vickers and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman."

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

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Tony Vickers and seconded by Councillor Densie Gaines:

"That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman."

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

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

7. Updates from Committees

Council noted the meetings that had been held since the last ordinary meeting of Council as laid out in Agenda Item 8.

8. Appointment of the Executive by the Leader of the Council for the 2025/26 Municipal Year

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jeff Brooks, highlighted that the additional workload generated from devolution and local government reorganisation required additional Executive resources, and so this had been added to Councillor Justin Pemberton's Portfolio.

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In addition, Councillor Tom McCann had been appointed to the Executive and would be the Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment). Councillor McCann's experience with the built environment was highlighted to Council and the Leader emphasised that it would be Councillor McCann who would ensure that the Council's key capital projects were kept on track.

As all the other Executive Members from 2024/25 would retain their portfolios, the composition of the Executive for the Municipal Year 2025/26 was announced to be as follows:

Councillor Jeff Brooks	–	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Communications
Councillor Denise Gaines	–	Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing
Councillor Patrick Clark	–	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health
Councillor Heather Codling	–	Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services
Councillor Iain Cottingham	–	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources
Councillor Nigel Foot	–	Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside
Councillor Stuart Gourley	–	Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways
Councillor Tom McCann	–	Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment)
Councillor Justin Pemberton	–	Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation
Councillor Vicky Poole	–	Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme

In response to these appointments, some opposition Members expressed disappointment about the additional allowance that would be paid by moving from nine to ten Members of the Executive, noting that almost a quarter of all Council Members would then be in receipt of an allowance for being on the Executive.

In response, the Leader noted that the additional resource was needed in order to best meet the challenges and opportunities of local government reorganisation and to achieve the delivery of their capital programme. For these reasons, he considered the additional appointment to be value for money.

9. Leader of the Council's Annual Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jeff Brooks, made his Annual Report to Council. He highlighted the progress that had been made in regard to provision for special educational needs and disability (SEND) children as well as with adult social care. As a result of the increased demand for these services, the Council now spent 64 pence in every pound on these areas. Due to financial pressures, the Administration changed the way the Council worked, from improving recruitment rates, significantly reducing spend on temporary workers – achieving a reduction of £6m – and reducing staff turnover.

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Several deliverables were also highlighted to Council. These included investments in young people and schools – such as the building of new classrooms, a new I-College, and the provision of new mental health and SEND support – improvements to roads, homes, transport, and leisure facilities – such as being on track to deliver 1000 affordable homes by 2030, football being brought back to Faraday Road, reducing pothole depth needed for repairs, planning to repair 60 kilometres of roads in the Municipal Year, and introducing 14 new 20 miles per hour limited areas – and finally to protecting the environment – such as by reaffirming the Council's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030, having installed 13 Kerbocharge points and with 72 EV points installed or in progress, promoting recycling (with West Berkshire now being in the top 15% of recycling Councils in England) and with several million invested to safeguard chalk streams and to help with flood alleviation. The Leader concluded by highlighting the principles of the Council, those of Customer Focus, Integrity, and Fairness and that these were driving the Administration's actions.

In response, the Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor Ross Mackinnon, and the Leader of the Minority Group, Councillor David Marsh, asked several questions of the Leader.

On why the Administration was planning to continue with the extension of the pedestrianisation of Newbury Town Centre despite the majority of residents responses to the consultation being against the proposal, the Leader highlighted that the extension was only a trial. After the trial period had ended, it would be assessed to see if it had worked, and if it was determined that it had not been successful, it would be stopped.

In addition, the Leader was questioned as to why the case in favour of pedestrianisation was not being proactively made on social media, leaving room for unchecked opposition, as was also suggested to have been the case with three weekly bin collections. In response, the Leader indicated that the Administration were using a wide range of communication methods to convey their policies, not just social media, in order to try to engage with all residents.

The Leader was also questioned as to whether the Administration was meeting their Manifesto commitment around ensuring that consultations were detailed, and residents' views were listened to, as they had proceeded with both pedestrianisation and three weekly bin collections despite residents being against the proposals when they were consulted. In response, the Leader noted the number of consultation outcomes the former Conservative Administration had not followed and that three weekly bin collections had been done in other authorities in the country. Although they were not widely approved of before implementation, the Leader believed that residents were satisfied with those services once they were in place. He also indicated that it would help assist with recycling uptake.

Council noted the Leader's reassurance to users of the Resource Centres that if the service could not be provided privately, the changes to the Resource Centres would not go ahead.

10. **Amendments to the Constitution to Support Changes to Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements**

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning amendments to the Constitution in order to support changes to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.

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

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“That Council:

- A) approves the proposed changes to the Scrutiny Model effective from 15 May 2025, replacing the two existing committees (Scrutiny Commission and Health Scrutiny Committee), with three committees as follows:
- Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee
 - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
 - Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
- (b) delegates amendments to the Constitution that are necessary to accommodate the above changes to the Scrutiny Model (outlined in Section 5 of this report) to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Constitution Review Task Group
- (c) approves the updated programme of public meetings required to accommodate the above changes to the Scrutiny Model (as set out in Appendix C)”

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that Council was asked to consider a new structure for how scrutiny would be conducted. This would involve the creation of three Scrutiny Committees, each with their distinct areas of focus, and the replacement of the Planning, Transport, and Environment Advisory Groups with a new Executive body called the Policy Development Group (PDG). The membership of the PDG would be drawn from all Members of the Council and would be used to help develop specific policies which could be taken forward for adoption.

The Governance Committee had discussed these proposals at their meeting on 29 April 2025 and had raised several concerns with the proposals. However, Council noted that there was a desire to give the Scrutiny Committees more influence and for them to work more effectively. For these reasons, the recommendations had remained and were being put before Council. Members noted that the proposals had also been discussed with the Group Leaders who were generally supportive of them as they would make the Council more in line with how scrutiny was conducted in other similar authorities. However, some Members indicated that they would have liked the proposals to have been taken through the existing Scrutiny Commission for their input.

Members emphasised the necessity of sufficient Officer support for these new Scrutiny Committees and highlighted the extensive work that the Principal Democratic Services Officer, Gordon Oliver, and the Principal Policy Officer, Vicky Phoenix, had been providing to the current structure. Having opposition group Members chairing some of the Scrutiny Committees was also agreed to be a positive inclusion but they noted that training, especially for new Members of these Committees, would be essential in order to run the meetings as effectively as they could be. These proposals were also noted as helping to ensure that proper scrutiny was put on key service areas, such as adult and children services.

In response to questions about the PDG, particularly about its Terms of Reference, membership, and proportionality, Council was informed that the Group’s membership would be open to all Members and would allow them all to contribute to policy development rather than it being controlled by the Executive. In addition, the Terms of Reference would not be voted on as it was a body of the Executive, not Council.

In response to a point about the Council’s internal governance processes, Council was assured that Corporate Board would not block the progression of any report unless it was unaffordable or not legally possible.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

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

11. **Appointment of and Allocation of Seats on Committees for the 2025/26 Municipal Year**

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 12) concerning the appointment and allocation of seat on the Council's Committees for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

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

- "That Council is informed that, under paragraph 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice has been received that the Members set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report are to be regarded as Members of the Liberal Democrat Group, Conservative Group, and Minority Group respectively.
- That Council agrees to the appointment of the various Committees and to the number of places on each as set out in Table A, at paragraph 5.5 of the report.
- That Council agrees to the allocation of seats to the Political Groups in accordance with section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1989 as set out in Table B at paragraph 5.16 of the report.
- That the number of substitutes on each of the Committees be as set out at paragraph 5.19 of the report.
- In respect of the District and Area Planning Committees, the substitute Members are all drawn from Members representing wards within the Committee's area who are not appointed to the Committee. Where substitutes attend the District Planning meeting, they need to be drawn from the same Area Planning meeting as the Member they are substituting for.
- That Council approves the appointment of Members to the Committees as set out in Appendix A, and the appointments to Task Groups and Panels set out in Appendix B, which are in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups.
- That Council, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 as amended, agrees that the Council's Policy Framework for 2025/26 be as set out in paragraph 5.23 of this report, and that any necessary amendments be made to the Council's Constitution.
- That Council notes that other plans, policies, and strategies requiring approval which are not included in the approved Policy Framework, and which are not otherwise reserved by law to Council, will be the responsibility of the Council's Executive in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.
- That Council notes that Part 2, Paragraph 6.2 of Article 6 of the Constitution will be amended to reflect any changes made to the Executive by the Leader of the Council at the Annual Council meeting.
- That the appointment of up to two non-voting co-opted Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance Committee as detailed within Appendix A of the report.
- To re-appoint three Independent Persons (standards) namely Lindsey Appleton, Mike Wall and Alan Penrith, and to appoint Simon Carey as an Independent Person (Audit) to focus on the risk and audit functions of the Governance Committee.

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- To note the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in Appendix C of the report.
- That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the changes to the number of Members of the Council and following the appointments to Committees.
- That Council is also informed about the Council Bodies Rules as detailed at Part 6 of the Constitution detailed at Appendix E to the report.”

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that this included the previously agreed changes to the Scrutiny Committees and put forward how the seats on all the Council’s Committees would be allocated to different groups. Council noted that membership of the Personnel Committee had also been recommended to be increased up to seven Members, from five, in order to avoid quoracy issues.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report and the proposed appointments to Committees, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

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

12. **Appointments to Outside Bodies for the 2025/26 Municipal Year**

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 13) concerning the appointment to those outside bodies whose membership was reserved to Council.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Densie Gaines:

“That Council:

A) approves the appointments for the Municipal Year 2025/26, in accordance with Appendix A, of Member representatives to the following outside bodies:

- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

B) notes the appointments as detailed in Appendix A of Member representatives to the Local Government Association General Assembly.”

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that it proposed several outside body appointments and that they were proportionate to the allocation of Groups on the Council.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report and the proposed appointments to outside bodies, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

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

13. **West Berkshire Council Member Charter**

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning the West Berkshire Council Member Charter.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“That Council approves the adoption of the Member Charter.”

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that the Council already had a number of principles guiding conduct, such as the Code of Conduct, but that the Member Charter was a new commitment to behaviour between Members and Council staff.

COUNCIL - 15 MAY 2025 - MINUTES

The Charter was adapted from the one that was used at the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and had been discussed and agreed with all the Group Leaders. The Charter was a commitment to put community first and that work between Members and Officers would be open and honest. Members would be accountable for their own behaviour and challenge it where it fell short of the highest standards. The importance of treating Council staff with respect and preventing bullying behaviour was also emphasised.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the proposals, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

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

14. **Review of Council Strategy performance measures**

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 15) concerning the review of the Council Strategy's Performance Measures.

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

"That Council:

- A) approves a revised reporting framework for the Council Strategy.
- B) approves the 12 areas of focus detailed at paragraph 5.12 to assist in the determination of new high priority measures for the year 2025-26."

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that it was a refresh of the Strategy and Delivery Plan. The Executive had examined a number of measures in the Delivery Plan and was proposing to focus on 20 high priority areas. Council was also recommended to adopt the new 12 areas of focus. He noted that there had been a number of adjustments, removals, and combining of performance measures which would allow the Council to be more effective and focused in its reporting and that this decision was taken following the outcome of the Council's peer review.

It was suggested that Measure HP08 and HP09, about bringing empty homes back into use and closing the attainment gap, should not be under the 'Tackling Climate and Ecological Emergency' Priority Area.

In response to a question about the removal of the residents' surveys, Council noted that the Administration wanted continuous feedback, not a once every two-year consultation. Some Members also expressed concern about the removal of the target to reduce the number of times the Executive considered items in a private session (Part II). On the de-prioritisation of the draft Framework, Members noted that this would be kept in review, although the Council had prioritised flood and drainage improvements.

Some Members indicated that the removal of many measures indicated that the Administration was giving up on those areas. However, other Members suggested that this indicated a consolidation and streamlining of reporting which would then help guide the work of the Administration in a more effective way.

In order to better understand the history of the measures, it was suggested that the significant dates of the items be included in the report. This would help with transparency as it would show areas where deadlines had not been met.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

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

COUNCIL - 15 MAY 2025 - MINUTES

15. Planning Appendix Constitutional Update

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 16) concerning the Planning Appendix Constitutional update.

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

“That Council:

- A) approves Part 6.8 Planning Appendix for adoption as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- B) approves Part 11 Scheme of Delegation be updated as set out in Appendix B to the report;
- C) delegates to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Constitution Review Task Group, the power to update Parts 6.8 and 11 of the Constitution to ensure that this reflects the new rules, and to make any minor additional corrections to the parts of the Constitution to ensure consistency in terminology and presentation; and
- D) approves that the changes to the Constitution detailed in this report, take effect from 1 June 2025.

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that the Constitution Review Task Group (CRTG) had been working systematically through every part of the Constitution, and that this was the latest result of that work. Council noted that the Governance Committee had reviewed the report and recommended it be approved by Council. Councillor Brooks also indicated that the Group would be looking to make the Constitution more navigable in a future update.

Several Members expressed support for the reconsideration of a point in the Constitution that required Substitute Members to be from the same political groups. They noted that planning was not a political committee and so, in the event that a Member was unable to attend a meeting, they should be permitted to call on a substitute from any party. However, it was noted that substitution rules were determined by political proportionality, and so this may not likely be able to be amended.

Some Members also indicated that hearing the speech from the adjoining Ward Member before the actual Ward Member had spoken was not the most effective order of speaking, and that this should also be reviewed. Some Members also suggested that Executive Members sitting on Planning Committees where a Council proposal was to be considered should be reviewed. This was suggested in order to help create distance between the applicant and determiner. Members noted that the CRTG would discuss these suggestions when the Group re-examined this section of the Constitution.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

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

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 9.22 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

DRAFT

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

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 10 JUNE 2025**

Councillors Present: Tony Vickers (Chairman), Stephanie Steevenson (Vice-Chairman), Adrian Abbs, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Jeff Brooks, Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Martin Colston, Jeremy Cottam, Iain Cottingham, Laura Coyle, Paul Dick, Billy Drummond, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Clive Hooker, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Tom McCann, Biyi Oloko, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Vicky Poole, Christopher Read, Matt Shakespeare, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor, Martha Vickers, and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Sarah Clarke (Monitoring Officer and Interim Executive Director for Resources), Paul Coe (Executive Director for Adult Social Care), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director for Children's Services), Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director for Place), Paula Amorelli (Team Leader for Planning Policy), Sharon Armour (Legal Services Manager), Laura Callan (Service Lead for Planning), Sam Chiverton (Zoom Host), Philippa Venables (Service Director for Development and Housing), Darius Zarazel (Principal Democratic Services Officer), Honorary Alderman Tony Linden, and Honorary Alderman Graham Pask

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Carlyne Culver, Councillor Janine Lewis, Councillor Nick Carter, Councillor Phil Barnett, Councillor Nigel Foot, Councillor Antony Amirtharaj, Councillor Jane Langford (attended virtually), Honorary Alderman Graham Bridgman, Honorary Alderman Paul Bryant, Honorary Alderman Adrian Edwards, Honorary Alderman Rick Jones, Honorary Alderman Mollie Lock, Honorary Alderman Hilary Cole, and Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles

PART I

1. Declarations of Interest

All Members declared that they had been lobbied by residents, Enborne Parish Council, Tilehurst Parish Council, Cold Ash Parish Council, and Thatcham Town Council on Agenda Item three – the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041. However, as this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable interest, or non-registerable interest, they determined to remain in the meeting to debate and vote on the item.

Councillor Clive Taylor declared that he was the Chairman of Tilehurst Parish Council, and that the Council was historically, and remained, opposed to the Pincents Lane development proposed in Agenda Item three. However, as he believed that this did not prejudice or influence his judgement of the public interest, he determined to remain in the meeting to debate and vote on the item.

Councillor Tony Vickers declared that he was a representative on the North Wessex Down National Landscape Council of Partners. However, as he believed that this did not prejudice or influence his judgement of the public interest, he determined to remain in the meeting to debate and vote on the item.

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2. Adoption of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) 2023-2041

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Tony Vickers and seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines:

“That Council agree that speaking times for this item be:

- 10 minutes for the proposer of the motion
- 5 minutes for the seconder of the motion
- 6 minutes for the Leader of the Opposition Group
- 4 minutes for the Leader of the Minority Group
- 3 minutes for all other speeches, as per the Constitution.”

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

Council considered a report (Agenda Item three) concerning the Local Plan Review (the Plan) for West Berkshire.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Denise Gaines and seconded by Councillor Justin Pemberton:

“That Council:

- 1) Recognises that the Council is still under the Direction set out in the letter from the Minister of State for Housing, Planning and Building Safety dated 19th December 2023 (as set out in Appendix C) that required the Council to consider adopting the LPR, including any Main Modifications recommended by the Planning Inspector deemed necessary to make the Plan sound.
- 2) Acknowledges the contents of the Inspector’s Final Report (as set out in Appendix D).
- 3) Adopts the West Berkshire LPR 2023-2041 (as set out in Appendix E), which incorporates the Main Modifications as set out in the Inspector’s Final Report, and other Additional (minor) Modifications (as set out in Appendix F).
- 4) Subject to recommendation 2, replace the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 Development Plan Document (adopted July 2012), the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted May 2017), and the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 – 2006 (saved policies 2007 as amended in July 2012 and May 2017), with the West Berkshire LPR 2023-2041.
- 5) Subject to recommendation 2, adopt the Policies Map (as set out in Appendix G) and publish them alongside the West Berkshire LPR 2023-2041.
- 6) Subject to recommendation 2, accept the content of the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) Report (as set out in Appendix H) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA): Addendum of Proposed Modifications (as set out in Appendix I) and publish them in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 7) Subject to recommendation 2, give delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to agree any further Additional (minor) Modifications to the LPR and updates to its accompanying Policies Map, as appropriate, before publication.”

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Councillor Gaines introduced the report and emphasised that the Administration did not consider this to be their Local Plan, as it was submitted before the current Administration took control of the Council. She also noted the speed at which the Plan was submitted to the Regulation 19 stage by the previous Conservative led Administration, just before the local elections in 2023. At that election, the Liberal Democrats campaigned on fixing the Plan and had done everything possible to do so – including attempting to withdraw it and stop its examination. However, the Council had been directed by the Secretary of State to not withdraw the Plan, and Members were informed that they were still under that direction.

She predicted the point that would be made by Opposition Members, that the new sites would not have been allocated if the Plan had not been withdrawn. As the Plan's Inspector had requested further work be done and that additional information be provided about site allocations, she believed the two-year delay to the Plan would have resulted in these new allocations being brought forward anyway. As the Plan needed to be considered sound by the Inspector, he had requested 112 main modifications be made. These main modifications ranged from minor alterations to major policy changes.

Specifically, the Inspector found that SP17, the North East Thatcham site, was not a sound allocation without the addition of 1,000 houses, increasing the total for the site up to 2,500 – the figure that was presented in the Thatcham Growth Study. However, the Plan would enable the Council to help create a new Masterplan and Design Code for the site that the developer would be required to meet. This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would be finalised before any application for the site would be submitted and the Council would look to get input from all relevant stakeholders, including local residents and Town and Parish Councils. Councillor Gaines also informed Council of the Administration's intention to set up a residents' forum to help get input into the SPD.

If the Council did not adopt the Plan, Councillor Gaines indicated that this would lead to the Council being forced to meet higher housing targets set by Central Government and not be able to control where, or to what quality, homes would be built. In addition, it would be very likely that the sites allocated in the Plan would be brought forward by developers anyway, but without a Plan the Council would not be able to control their design, energy efficiency standards, associated infrastructure requirements, health and educational provision, or employment aspects. In addition, Council noted that it was highly likely that the Secretary of State would intervene to force the adoption of the Plan on the Council if it was not approved, resulting in additional costs. Ultimately, Councillor Gaines recommended the Plan be adopted by Council because the option of having the Local Plan was less bad than not having the Plan.

Members of the Opposition highlighted the Liberal Democrat 2023 Local Election Manifesto pledge to 'fix the flawed Local Plan', indicating that this was not feasible when it had been promised and was simply an attempt to win the election. It was also suggested that if the Administration had not delayed the progression of the Plan by seven months by attempting to withdraw it, the site allocations that were widely opposed – such as the additional 1,000 houses at North East Thatcham and the allocation at Pincents Lane – would not have been included. Therefore, the Plan that was being recommended for approval was significantly worse than the original Plan the previous Conservative Administration had submitted.

It was also highlighted that the Local Plan submitted by the previous Administration had taken over three and a half years to submit and so was not rushed to submission. In addition, Council noted it had been the result of cross-party work. However, the point was

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made that disagreement with the inclusion of the widely opposed site allocations had been made clear during these cross-party discussions.

Council discussed several site allocations from the Plan. On the three allocations in Theale, some Members opposed the cumulative impact these developments would have on local facilities which had not been upgraded after other developments had taken place in the village. In addition, flood risk was also raised as a potential concern resulting from these additional allocations.

The site allocation at Pincents Lane was also raised as a serious concern by several Members. Council noted that a previous planning application on the site had been refused at appeal and that one application had received over 3,000 letters of objection from local residents. A current petition against the development of the site had also received over 1,700 signatures. The principal concerns about allocating this site were around the permanent loss of an open and wild green space, the poor highways and access arrangements for the site, and the local traffic issues that would be compounded by the additional vehicle movements. Concerns about the pressures on local health services were also raised. Members also objected to the extension of the Tilehurst settlement boundary to include the site as they saw this as an inappropriate way of making development of the site more likely.

On the proposed site allocations in Cold Ash, as these had not been supported by the recently adopted Cold Ash Neighbourhood Plan, some Members indicated that they could not support the approval of these sites and so would not be voting to approve the Plan.

For North East Thatcham, Members noted that the majority of local residents were opposed to the proposal for 2,500 homes on the site. As the facilities and infrastructure in Thatcham were at maximum capacity, Members raised serious concerns about what the significant increase in Thatcham's population would mean for these already strained services. Residents had also indicated that they would like to see more detail about the relief road and healthcare facility provisions but that these had not been provided in the Plan. However, Council also noted the conclusion of an independent King's Counsel that had determined that there were not sufficient grounds to challenge this site allocation. Overall, several Members highlighted that this site allocation was neither reasonable nor sustainable, and therefore they could not support the adoption of the Plan.

On the allocation in Pangbourne, some Members believed that this was of an appropriate scale for the village and that there was local capacity to take on the additional residents. This allocation was used as an example of an appropriate site which would help contribute to the viability of the village in the long term.

In addition, a point was raised that if both the previous and current Administrations had worked together on a Local Plan, the Council would not be in the position of risking not having a Plan or adopting one that was unacceptable.

Although some Members disagreed with some of the allocations proposed, as not having a Plan would trigger the 'tilted balance' in favour of planning applications and also result in the Council needing to meet the Central Government housing figure of 1,070 houses per year rather than the 515 in the Plan, they agreed that approving the Plan would be less harmful than not having a Plan. In addition, the Plan would enable the Council to have some measure of control over developments that would be coming forward in the Plan period, ensuring that all applications, even in the allocated sites, were built to a good quality and would be community focused. Therefore, on balance, these Members agreed to support the approval of the Plan.

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Council also noted that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government would be very likely to intervene immediately should Council refuse to approve the Plan. In this event, the Plan would be forced on the Council, and it would be charged for any associated costs. In addition, Council noted that this could be the last Local Plan produced by West Berkshire Council due to the forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation. In that move into a new authority, these targets could be readjusted.

Overall, although some Members were opposed to the Plan due to several of the site allocations proposed, the majority of Members considered that the risks of not approving the Plan outweighed those drawbacks.

At the request of Councillor Jeff Brooks, supported by Councillors Ross Mackinnon, Dominic Boeck, and Howard Woollaston, a named vote was held.

Adoption of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) 2023-2041		
For	Against	Abstain
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Adrian Abbs	Dominic Boeck	Dennis Benneyworth
Jeff Brooks	Jeremy Cottam	
Patrick Clark	Paul Dick	
Heather Codling	Clive Hooker	
Martin Colston	Paul Kander	
Iain Cottingham	Ross Mackinnon	
Laura Coyle	Alan Macro	
Billy Drummond	David Marsh	
Denise Gaines	Tom McCann	
Stuart Gourley	Biyi Oloko	
Owen Jeffery	Chris Read	
Geoff Mayes	Joanne Stewart	
Erik Pattenden	Clive Taylor	
Justin Pemberton		
Vicky Poole		
Matt Shakespeare		
Richard Somner		
Stephanie Steevenson		
Lousie Sturgess		
Martha Vickers		
Tony Vickers		
Howard Woollaston		
22	13	1

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

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 8.08 pm)

CHAIRMAN
Date of Signature

Council – 17 July 2025

Item 4 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 6 – Public Questions

To Follow

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 7 – Membership of Committees

Verbal Item

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 8 – Motions from previous meetings

Verbal Item

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 9 – Updates from Committees

Verbal Item

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Local Transport Plan 4

Committee considering report:	Council
Date of Committee:	17 July 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Date Head of Service agreed report:	12 June 2025
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	17 June 2025
Report Author:	Alec Gore, Transport Decarbonisation & Strategy Team Leader
Forward Plan Ref:	C4652

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) for adoption. It is a statutory requirement that, as the Local Transport Authority, West Berkshire Council has a Local Transport Plan. This plan will cover the period 2025-2040.
- 1.2 The LTP4 is a key document for the district setting the Council's transport vision, associated objectives and investment priorities. It includes an action plan for delivery. Importantly, it supports the Council's Local Plan and Environment Strategy and links with many aspects of delivering the Council's wider [priorities and goals](#).
- 1.3 Having a good quality and up to date Local Transport Plan in place is likely to assist us in any future external bids for transport related funding.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council adopts the Local Transport Plan 2025-2040 (LTP4).

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>Projects and actions already underway are funded using existing approved budgets. Teams across the Council use the budget setting process to plan for future programmes and secure funding for them.</p> <p>Where projects that are not yet funded have been included in the LTP4 Action Plan, before these projects progress any</p>

	further (if considered appropriate) business cases and funding bids would be required along with formal budget approval.			
Human Resource:	There are no direct HR implications as a result of this report.			
Legal:	There are no direct Legal implications as a result of this report.			
Risk Management:	Any projects implemented under the LTP4 Action Plan or its subsidiary strategies would have their own Risk Management.			
Property:	There are no direct Property implications as are result of this report.			
Policy:	<p>The LTP4 aligns with and supports the Local Plan. It also supports delivery of the refreshed Environment Strategy.</p> <p>The LTP4 will play a part in informing and shaping relevant Council policies and plans particularly across the Highways and Transport teams in the Environment Department.</p> <p>This results in collaborative working as officers develop and deliver effective measures for the Council as it addresses the climate and ecological emergencies as well as other important health and wellbeing outcomes through its policies, plans and events.</p> <p>There are also strong links with other Berkshire authorities and wider authorities across the region through our sub-national transport body, Transport for the South East (TfSE).</p>			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		No impact directly. Across the LTP4 Action Plan on a project-by-project basis, equalities should be considered through the PMM process to ensure there are no negative impacts.

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		No impact directly. Across the LTP4 Action Plan on a project-by-project basis, equalities should be considered through the PMM process to ensure there are no negative impacts.
Environmental Impact:	✓			<p>The rollout of the Action Plan in the LTP4 will demonstrate its delivery, which seeks to have a positive impact on the environment and, where it focuses on the work of the Council, will help it achieve its primary target of net zero by 2030.</p> <p>As the projects within the Action Plan are implemented there is consideration in the detailed planning stages as to whether there are unintended negative environmental impacts that require mitigation.</p>
Health Impact:	✓			The projects and activities within the LTP4 Action Plan that have a focus on carbon reduction will have health benefits through a reduction in air pollution. Some projects seek to improve health and wellbeing as a key benefit, e.g. Active Travel.
ICT Impact:		✓		There is no significant ICT impact.
Digital Services Impact:		✓		There is no significant impact on Digital Services.
Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			The LTP4 will contribute to tackling the climate and ecological emergency . It will also contribute towards a prosperous and resilient West Berkshire as it supports local economic growth through key infrastructure and public transport developments , and more travel options available to residents, including in rural areas.

Core Business:	✓			The LTP4 is a core part of Council business because it provides the framework for how the authority manages and develops transport infrastructure and services to support local needs , economic growth, and sustainability goals. It is a statutory requirement under the Local Transport Act 2008 and acts as the key mechanism for delivering integrated transport at a local level.
Data Impact:		✓		It is not envisaged that there will be any data impacts.
Consultation and Engagement:	The Transport Act 2000 imposes requirements for consultation during the preparation of an LTP, both with the public and statutory bodies , e.g. Historic England, National Highways. Two public consultations have been held locally , one at the Strategy development stage and a second on the whole plan, including the Action Plan. We have also consulted with significant stakeholders, neighbouring authorities and town and parish councils as well as sub-national transport bodies and local bus and rail companies .			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to seek adoption of the Local Transport Plan 4 (2025 – 2040) in Appendix B. Local Transport Plans often have supporting documents providing further details for delivery around a particular topic area or mode of travel. Where necessary, the Council will develop or update certain documents in support of the LTP4 and, following appropriate consultation, bring these forward as Individual Decisions.
- 4.2 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is the Council's key transport policy document and is a statutory requirement under the Local Transport Act 2008. This places a requirement on Local Transport Authorities to develop an LTP for their geographical area, having regard to Government guidance and policies on the environment.
- The requirement to update LTP3 has been influenced by a series of major changes in Government policies and priorities at a national, sub-regional and local level, including;
 - Greater emphasis on the need to decarbonise transport
 - Changes to lifestyles and economic recovery following Covid
 - Transport for South East Regional Transport Strategy
 - The Council's Local Plan Review
 - The Council's own commitments to achieve Net Zero by 2030 (as outlined in the Environment Strategy)
- 4.2 Development of the new LTP4 has taken place in the absence of LTP guidance from the Department of Transport (DfT), as DfT have encouraged local authorities to progress the review and update of their LTPs. DfT have also provided a strong indication of the likely contents of future LTP guidance. These have been considered in the preparation of the LTP4.
- 4.4 The LTP4 contains a long-term transport strategy for the District and a draft indicative Action Plan that will help guide the delivery of the plan and inform development of, for example, the highways capital programme. The LTP4 Strategy contains four vision themes with supporting objectives, which have helped form the approach for four place areas identified in the document.
- 4.5 Whilst the LTP4 covers a 15-year period, there will be opportunity for reviewing and refreshing the plan to reflect on any significant local or national changes and to ensure continued alignment with other key Council strategies and plans such as the Local Plan and Environment Strategy.

5 Supporting Information

Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy Document and Action Plan

- 5.1 The proposed LTP4 can be seen in Appendix B. The DfT had initially proposed to issue updated Local Transport Plan in spring 2023. However, the publication of the draft guidance was continually delayed and has yet to be published. In lieu of published draft

guidance, DfT has continued to urge local authorities to progress the review and update of their LTPs and provided local authorities with a strong indication of the likely contents. The new LTP4 has been prepared in anticipation of the requirements of the draft guidance, which includes putting an emphasis on;

- Having a 'place' based approach, reflecting functional travel areas and not travel modes.
- Having a 'vision led' approach, with a focus on outcomes and local priorities.

5.2 Therefore, a Place based approach has been developed for the new LTP4. This recognises that a one size fits all approach is not suitable for the LTP given the diverse nature of West Berkshire in terms of its landscape and its communities.

5.3 The vision led approach has 4 themes supported by a series of associated objectives, as shown in Figure 1 below.

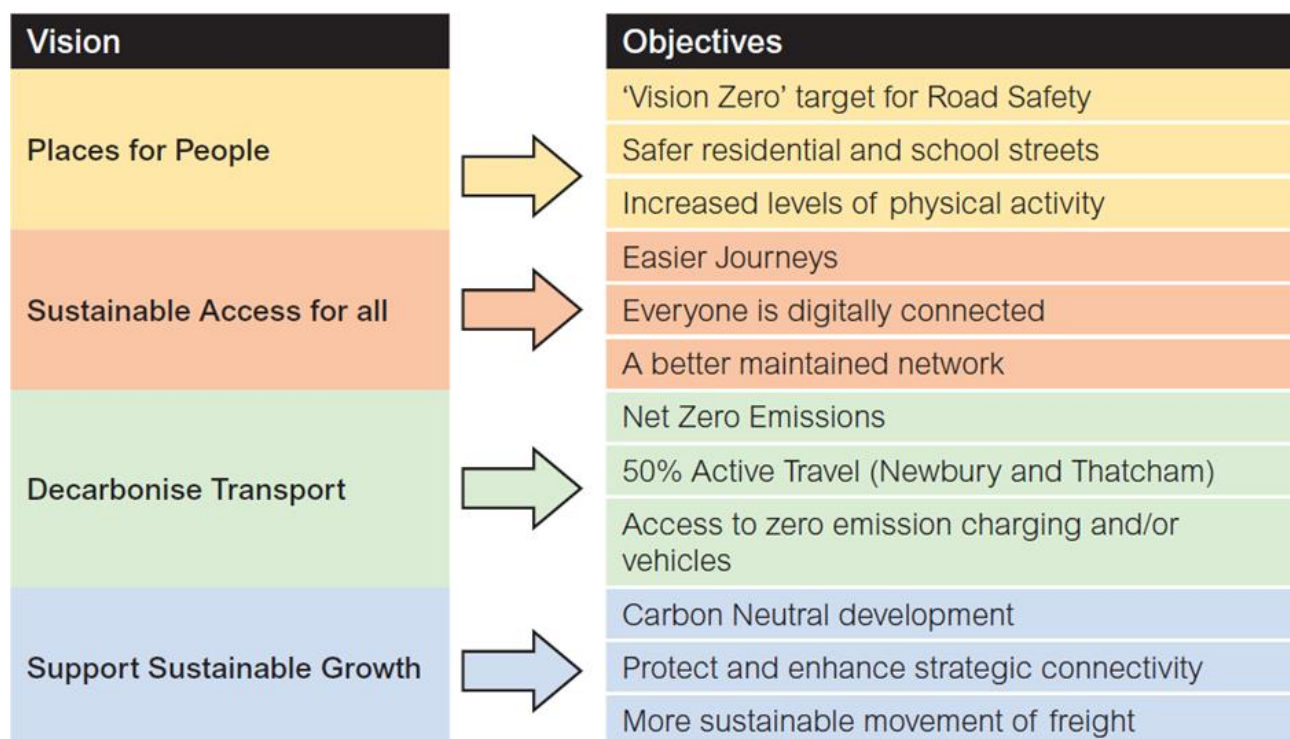


Figure 1: LTP4 Vision Themes and Associated Objectives

Consultation and Engagement

5.4 As well as being underpinned by a robust evidence base, the development of the LTP4 has been shaped by considerable consultation and engagement. This has included engagement with key officers to outline and refine the vision themes and objectives, as well as to develop the Action Plan. In addition, regular presentations have been made to Members at the former Transport Advisory Group (TAG) meetings throughout the development of the LTP4 Strategy. This has provided the opportunity for cross-party involvement throughout the process.

- 5.5 A first round of public consultation in early 2023 focused on the main LTP4 Strategy document. This included seeking views on the main priorities for transport in the district and the main vision themes and associated objectives. Responses were received from members of the public, town and parish councils, local user and interest groups and Network Rail.
- 5.6 Results from the 2023 consultation indicated that the top three transport priorities identified by respondents were;
- Access to public transport
 - Pedestrian facilities
 - Clean air
- 5.7 There was broad support for the place-based approach. While results from the consultation also indicated broad support for the draft LTP4's main vision themes and associated objectives, there were some suggestions for changes, including;
- An increased focus on maintenance
 - The need to provide comprehensive, rather than fragmented, cycle networks
 - The similarity of many of the sustainable access objectives relating to public transport
 - That there should be more explicit targets relating to the objectives.
- 5.8 A revised draft LTP4 was produced following the results of the consultation, as well as considering other policies changes, along with emerging priorities from the new UK Government following the General Election in July 2024. As a result, a revised set of objectives to support the four main vision themes were developed (as shown in Figure 1).
- 5.9 A second round of public consultation was held in spring 2025, which involved seeking views on the revised LTP4 Strategy document, along with a draft Action Plan, which set out the measures that would help deliver the LTP4's ambitions. The Action Plan will help inform future capital programmes for highway and transport schemes, as well as being used to help bid for scheme specific funding when such opportunities arise.
- 5.10 Results from the 2025 consultation indicate broad support for the vision themes and associated objectives. Therefore, given the generally positive response to the draft plan, it is not considered that substantial changes are required. Some minor revisions will be made in terms of details to the place-based strategies and the Action Plan to respond to points raised in consultation and to changes in circumstance.
- 5.11 While there is broad support for improving transport and infrastructure across West Berkshire, many respondents expressed concerns about implementation, funding, and a perceived imbalance in focus between urban and rural areas. Improved public transport, better road maintenance, enhanced cycling safety, realistic sustainability initiatives, and inclusive accessibility measures emerged as the strongest recurring themes in the feedback.

- 5.12 In addition to the draft LTP4 Strategy and Action Plan, the consultation included a statutory Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This SA report also included an Equality Impact Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Two other options were considered during the development of the LTP4 Strategy, These were:

6.2 *Continuation of existing LTP3*

Response – This would be viewed as a ‘Do-nothing’ option. This would not be appropriate as the current LTP3 is out of date, particularly in terms of advancement in transport-related technologies and a greater emphasis of the need to reduce carbon emissions from local transport. In addition, the Local Transport Act 2000 requires the local transport authority to keep the plan under review and have an up-to-date adopted plan to serve its local area.

Furthermore, to ignore the Government’s call for new LTPs from Local Transport Authorities could result in receiving a reduced allocation of capital funding from DfT and a weakened position for making the case for future external grant funding and developer contributions. Therefore, this option is not considered appropriate.

6.3 *LTP4 with a greater ‘carbon-focused’ approach*

Response - This option would seek to develop and introduce measures that provide a greater degree of carbon reduction beyond those proposed through the preferred LTP4 Strategy. This would involve the development of more widespread active and public transport measures, along with measures to help further reduce car usage.

The current proposed approach supports the Council’s Environment Strategy. It contributes to delivering the Council’s pathway to net zero and also supports the district to reach net zero as soon as practicable. What is proposed is a balanced approach that seeks to deliver net zero whilst recognising the varied nature of West Berkshire and the need to be connected and have good travel choices.

To have an even greater carbon-focused approach would require significantly higher levels of funding than currently proposed in the LTP4 Strategy and is likely to not recognise so well the needs of our different communities.

Given current and expected funding levels and general resources available in the Council, and reflecting on the appropriateness for our district, this option was not considered deliverable.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 All local transport authorities are required under the Local Transport Act 2000 to have a Local Transport Plan which sets the strategy and policy framework for their area. The West Berkshire LTP4 will ensure that the Council has an up-to-date LTP that reflects national, sub-regional and local policy.

- 7.2 The current LTP3, produced in 2011, is considered to be out of date as it does not match current policy priority areas, such as the need to reduce carbon emissions, and in terms of developments in technology that have impacted people's lives in how they access services and facilities and transport habits. It also does not address the Council's ambitions for achieving net zero.
- 7.3 Although DfT have yet to publish new LTP guidance, they have strongly urged local authorities to review and update their LTPs and have indicated what the guidance is likely to contain. Failure to update the LTP may put the Council at risk of missing future funding opportunities for transport funding, or from developer contributions.
- 7.4 Over the past three years, significant progress has been made in developing, consulting upon and finalising the new LTP4. This has included public consultation events in early 2023 and 2025, which have helped both shape the plan and to provide endorsement for its overall direction. There has also been continued cross-party Member engagement throughout the development process with regular updates at meetings of the Transport Advisory Group.

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Equity Impact Assessment

Appendix B – Local Transport Plan 4

Background Papers:

The statutory SA / SEA referred to in 5.18 was consulted on in Spring 2025 and can be provided on request. It is a detailed assessment of impacts and will be published on the Council's website alongside the LTP4 once approved.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

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

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

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Job Title: Transport Decarbonisation & Strategy Team Leader
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E-mail: alec.gore1@westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire Council
Equity Impact Assessment

March 2025

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Place Directorate / Climate Change Service Area
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	West Berkshire Council, Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy (2025 – 2040)
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New strategy for an existing function
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The assessment relates to the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) Strategy document, which upon adoption will replace the Council's current LTP3. The LTP covers all aspect of transport and travel in West Berkshire, outlining the Council's transport vision, associated objectives and investment priorities.</p> <p>The impacts are intended to benefit all groups by providing greater a choice of transport, safer travel on all transport networks, promoting delivery of better active travel and public transport routes, improving digital access to reduce the need for travel and better access to services and facilities.</p> <p>The vision themes and associated objectives in the LTP4 Strategy and the resultant potential measures outlined in the Action Plan are intended to have positive outcomes and it is not considered that they have any bias or discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community.</p> <p>Some of the key issues affecting protected characteristics have been highlighted in the assessment. However, the various measures and schemes implemented that would be delivered by the LTP4 would allow all groups to potentially benefit. These will be addressed through more detailed work of supporting documents and in the preparation of projects identified in the LTP4 Action Plan, which will address any impacts as is appropriate. This can be kept under review in a number of ways as described in the assessment.</p>
Completed By	Chris Sperring – Principal Transport Policy Officer
Authorised By	Alec Gore – Transport Decarbonisation and Strategy Team Leader

Date of Assessment	March 2025
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Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background

Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.

Good transport is a vital factor in building sustainable local communities. This includes contributing towards safer and stronger communities, and improved equality and social inclusion through improved accessibility to services and facilities. Transport also plays an important role in supporting the local and national economy. However, transport is one of the largest polluting sectors and traffic can be a barrier to healthy lifestyles, so transport policy needs to strike the right balance.

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) has an important role in influencing and developing transport at a local level by outlining the District's transport policies and investment priorities. The fourth LTP, covering the period 2025-2040, needs to consider national and local transport priorities.

Since the current Local Transport Plan 3 was published in 2011, the population in West Berkshire has increased around 5%. There have also been major technological advancements relating to digital access that have transformed how people work and access services. More people can work from home and there is a greater use of online shopping and accessing facilities, such as healthcare.

There has also been an increased emphasis on Climate Change and the need at all levels to reduce carbon emissions. This can be seen through national strategies and targets to introduce zero emission vehicles and encourage sustainable and active travel, and at the local level with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019 and publication of its Environment Strategy to guide the transition to net zero by 2030.

The new LTP4 has been developed around a vision that will deliver on local priorities for West Berkshire. This vision and associated objectives have been developed from national, regional and local strategies, engagement with officers and elected members in West Berkshire Council and refined to reflect feedback from public consultation.

This vision sets out the local priorities and associated objectives that the LTP will support, these are:

- Create Places for People
- Provide Sustainable Access for All
- Decarbonise Transport

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Sustainable Growth
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The LTP has been developed to deliver on local priorities for West Berkshire, which are outlined in the objectives below. Both the vision and associated objectives have been developed from national, regional and local strategies, engagement with officers and elected members in West Berkshire Council and refined to reflect feedback from public consultation on the first consultation draft for the LTP4 in February 2023.</p> <p>Create Places for people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Vision Zero target so that no one to be killed or fatally injured on the West Berkshire road network • Safer residential and town centre streets will support better places to live, encourage people to shop and eat locally and allow children and young people to walk/cycle to school safely • These changes will contribute to increasing physical activity, benefitting people's health and improved wellbeing. <p>Sustainable Access for All</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve travel choices and facilitate easier journeys, by increasing access to public and shared transport, improved interchange and to improve the attractiveness of public transport vehicles. • Support improved digital connectivity and facilitate the role of technology in helping people to access services and transforming the transport system. • Provide a better-maintained network, including embracing technology, improved co-ordination and reducing the carbon impact of operating and maintaining the transport network.

	<p>Decarbonise Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the transition of the transport sector to net zero through a combination of infrastructure improvements and behavioural change. • Supported by 50% of trips in Newbury and Thatcham to be made by active travel. • As active or public transport is not feasible for every trip, we need cleaner fuels and the LTP4 will support access to zero emission charging and emission facilities. <p>Support Sustainable Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The movement of people, goods and services in and through the district is vital to the economy and the LTP aims to protect and enhance strategic connectivity. • Support more sustainable movement of freight, including transition to more sustainable modes and management of freight in and through urban centres. • Align with the Local Plan to support sustainable growth, including carbon neutral development. <p>The way people travel depends on a range of factors such as proximity to services, trip purpose and the standard of digital and/or transport infrastructure. These factors typically are heavily influenced by the 'place' that people live in. Taking this into account, the LTP4 then provides an outline as to how these objectives will be delivered across the district according to three place types.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newbury and Thatcham • Rural areas (including villages and Hungerford falling within North Wessex Downs NLA) • Eastern Area (including Theale and Calcot) <p>In addition to the place areas, there are fundamental aspects of the transport network, such as maintenance and strategic connectivity that apply across the whole of West Berkshire.</p>
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<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>The development of the LTP4 Strategy has been underpinned by a robust evidence base comprising data across a range of different factors and travel modes. This data identifies existing conditions within West Berkshire, current challenges, opportunities, and suitable benchmarks against which the emerging LTP 4 should be considered. The supporting evidence base was made available on the Council website as part of the first draft consultation in February 2023.</p> <p>Accessibility</p> <p>Access to services – amenities, services and employment (including food store and healthcare) / Education / Education / Employment / Digital access (including people working from home) / Impacts of Covid-19 / Car ownership levels (split according to the three place areas)</p> <p>Population</p> <p>Current population (2021 Census data by place area, density, age group (including trends such as 33.8% increase in over-65 between 2011 & 2021)) / Migration / Deprivation (based on IMD data) / Experian mosaic data (groups together of individuals likely to share similar demographics, lifestyles and behaviours) /</p> <p>Travel Trends</p> <p>Mode choice compared to national and regional averages / District-wide modal choice (2021 Census) / District-wide commuting trends / Travel trends and mode choice by place</p> <p>Active Travel</p> <p>Active Travel networks / 2021 Census walking and cycling usage / WBC Active Travel monitoring / Network planning (West Berkshire and Reading Urban Area LCWIP's)</p> <p>Public Transport</p> <p>Bus network / Community transport / Bus patronage (including 2021 Census data) / Bus service improvement plan (BSIP) / Rail (including station catchment areas and station accessibility (i.e., step-free access)) / Rail station patronage (based on ORR Station Usage data) / Travel to work data (2021 Census)</p> <p>Freight</p> <p>Road freight (including HGV flows on West Berkshire roads) / Rail freight</p> <p>Road traffic</p>
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	Traffic flows from WBC ATC sites
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>Rolling the current LTP3 forward – This is in effect a ‘do nothing scenario’, which would see the current LTP3 remaining in place beyond 2026. This approach was not considered as this would be unable to consider changes in transport and policy issues that have occurred since 2011 and would be considered contrary to the Local Transport Act 2000, which requires local transport authorities to keep LTPs up to date. This includes national and local strategies and targets for carbon reduction and transport’s role in helping to achieve net zero and increase use of digital connectivity which has allowed more people to work from home or remotely access services and facilities.</p> <p>LTP4 with a greater ‘carbon-focused’ approach – This scenario would seek to deliver higher levels of carbon reduction through more widespread active travel and public transport measures, along with potential options to manage the demand of vehicular travel. The outcomes would include greater levels of accessibility for all and a greater reduction in the amount of greenhouse gases produced at the local level. This approach was not considered to be deliverable as it was considered highly unlikely that there would be the level of funding or resources available to effectively design and deliver the number of schemes associated with this option. In addition, some of the potential measures aimed at curbing vehicular use may not have the level of local support.</p> <p>The current proposed approach supports the Council’s Environment Strategy. It contributes to delivering the Council’s pathway to net zero and also supports the district to reach net zero as soon as practicable. What is proposed is a balanced approach that seeks to deliver net zero whilst recognising the varied nature of West Berkshire and the need to be connected and have good travel choices.</p> <p>To have an even greater carbon-focused approach would require significantly higher levels of funding than currently proposed in the LTP4 Strategy and is likely to not recognise so well the needs of our different communities.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Equity Impact Assessment

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The LTP4 will help to deliver greater modal choice and safer transport networks for all age groups, particularly younger and older people, who are more likely to be more reliant on public transport and active travel networks.			
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Measures delivered by the LTP4 will help to create better transport options for disabled people through developing improved accessibility for local transport networks and public transport, and improved information for transport users.			
Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The objectives of the LTP4 are unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to gender reassignment.			

Equity Impact Assessment

Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Due to its high-level and indirect impact on transport users that are in a marriage or civil partnership, the LTP4 is deemed to potentially have a neutral impact.			
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some positive impacts may arise for pregnancy and maternity through increased number of dropped kerbs and improved footpath maintenance, particularly for those with younger children in pushchairs.			
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Due to its high-level and indirect impact on transport users, the LTP4 is deemed to potentially have a neutral impact as it would be unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to their race.			

Equity Impact Assessment

Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All people are likely to benefit from the LTP4 associated objectives. Specifically, improvements to safety will be beneficial for women and girls who are disproportionately exposed to issues of gender-based violence on the streets and public transport services.			
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The objectives of the LTP4 are unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to their sexual orientation.			
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The objectives of the LTP4 are unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on a person due to their religion or belief.			

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The LTP4 objectives will seek to improve transport provision for rural communities. This may include developing public transport provision in line with the BSIP, improvements to digital access for improved access to services and homeworking and promoting safer active travel routes in rural areas and connections to urban areas.			
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The cost of private car transport can be unaffordable for some lower income households. The LTP4 will look to increase / improve active travel			

Equity Impact Assessment

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				and public transport (bus) networks.			
Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The objectives of the LTP4 are unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on displaced communities			
Care experienced people	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The objectives of the LTP4 are unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on care experienced people.			
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The objectives of the LTP4 are unlikely to have any more or less of an impact on the Armed Forces community.			

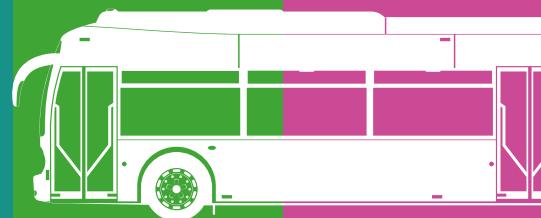
Section 4: Review

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

Review Date	March 2030 (whilst no adverse impacts have been identified in this assessment, we will continue to review progress and assess if new impacts emerge that were not foreseeable).
Person Responsible for Review	Alec Gore – Transport Decarbonisation and Strategy Team Leader
Authorised By	Jenny Graham – Environment Delivery Manager

EDI employee related EQiA's should now be sent to Human Resources hrenquiries@westberks.gov.uk

Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy Document (2025-2040)



July 2025



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce West Berkshire Council's Local Transport Plan 4 (2025-2040)—an ambitious, forward-thinking strategy designed to shape the future of transport across our district. From the bustling centres of Newbury and Thatcham to our picturesque rural communities, this plan sets out how we will improve connectivity, enhance accessibility, and drive forward our commitment to a greener, healthier West Berkshire.

Transport is at the heart of daily life, and with this strategy, we aim to ensure that residents, businesses, and visitors benefit from safe, reliable, and sustainable transport options. Building on the successes of previous investment—including railway station upgrades, improvements to active travel infrastructure, and expanding bus services—we are now taking bold steps toward reducing emissions, increasing public transport use, and supporting the transition to net-zero.

A key focus of this plan is place-based transport solutions—recognising that different communities have distinct needs. Our urban areas will see expanded walking and cycling networks, improved bus frequencies, and greater integration of shared mobility options. In rural areas, we will prioritise electric vehicle infrastructure, community-led transport schemes, and enhancements to digital connectivity, allowing more residents to access services without unnecessary travel.

We are also committed to tackling congestion, reducing road fatalities through Vision Zero, and ensuring that transport infrastructure aligns with the growing demands of our local economy and environment. The strategy reflects the priorities of our residents and stakeholders, whose feedback has been instrumental

in shaping this plan. By working together, we can deliver meaningful change that benefits everyone.

I encourage all residents, businesses, and community organisations to engage with this strategy and be part of the conversation about the future of transport in West Berkshire. With your support, we can build a transport network that is sustainable, accessible, and fit for the future.

With this local transport plan we can build a Prosperous and Resilient West Berkshire, whilst tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency.

Councillor Stuart Gourley
*Executive Portfolio Holder:
Environment and Highways*



Introduction

From the bustling centre of Newbury to the rolling hills and rural living in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, West Berkshire is a varied area with a range of different transport needs for residents, businesses and visitors across the District.

The existing framework for all aspects of transport and travel to support a stronger, greener, healthier and prosperous West Berkshire is set out in the Local Transport Plan 3 2011-2026 (LTP3).

West Berkshire Council has made good progress in delivering the LTP3, with significant transport investment over the last decade including:

- **Market Street Redevelopment** and a brand-new **Newbury Wharf Bus Station**.
- Working in partnership to deliver **Railway Station upgrades** including £7m upgrade of **Newbury Railway station** and current £4m upgrade of facilities at **Theale Railway Station**.
- Production of and securing funding towards our **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**, new

Demand Responsive services and enhanced **services to Basingstoke**.

- **Bond Riverside** (formerly London Road Industrial Estate) access junction and **Kings Road Link Road**, Newbury.
- **Cycle facilities**, including stage one of the Stockcross to Newbury path, following on from the adoption of our **Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP)**.
- **Electric Vehicle Charge Point (EVCP)** installations across the District, with examples in Lambourn High Street, Pangbourne Station Road, and locations across Newbury and Thatcham.

Over the last decade the population of West Berkshire has increased by 5%. However, in the 10 years prior to the COVID pandemic in 2020, traffic volumes on main routes have remained stable, air quality has improved, and public and shared transport use has been growing. Traffic volumes now remain a few percent lower than before the pandemic, although the number of vans and good vehicles has increased.



Newbury Bus Station (left) and Linkway 2, upgraded Newbury-Thatcham cycle route

How residents access services is also changing. Digital access has reduced travel for retail and services, the number of people who work from home has increased, and fewer younger people are learning to drive.

In future, transport strategy and investment will need to consider, and be adaptable to, changes in society, technology, policy and the environment. This includes new development identified in our Local Plan. The bulk of new housing is likely to be to the south of Newbury and at north-east Thatcham. Additional development will change travel demands, but also provides opportunities for new infrastructure and travel options for new and existing residents.

Transport is the largest contributor to emissions accounting for just over **half of carbon emissions** in West Berkshire, compared to a national average of 32%. For trips which start and/or end in West Berkshire, rural areas account for two thirds of emissions, compared to a sixth (15-16%) in Newbury and Thatcham and a sixth in the Eastern areas adjacent to Reading.

West Berkshire Council has a strong record of responding to green issues and unanimously declared a **Climate Emergency** in 2019. It is committed to reaching net zero. This draft **Local Transport Plan** strategy sets out ambitious aspirations in support of the transition towards net zero. Achieving adopted

carbon targets will mean making bolder changes to the network and prioritising investment in reducing emissions to a greater extent than ever before. This includes:

- a target for 50% of trips within Newbury and Thatcham to be made by walking and cycling, up from the current 35%
- supporting the transfer of freight to more sustainable modes,
- increasing access to EVCPs, and
- growing the network of shared vehicles to provide an affordable alternative to (single or multiple) car ownership.

Transport also has impacts on air quality, noise and wildlife and the LTP can help in reducing negative impacts and supporting our legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Work to understand travel patterns, trends and emerging opportunities has informed the development of the new LTP. We consulted on a draft strategy in 2023. We have taken on board the feedback received, and the emerging priorities from a new national government, to develop a revised strategy and an action plan that sets out measures that will help in delivering our ambitions. We would now like to receive your views on the draft LTP strategy and Action Plan.

A Place Based Strategy

The way people travel depends on a range of factors such as proximity to services, the reason for the journey they are making and the standard of digital and/or transport infrastructure. These factors are typically heavily influenced by the 'place' in which people live.

The development of the LTP has identified different functional areas of West Berkshire, proposed here as the following place types:

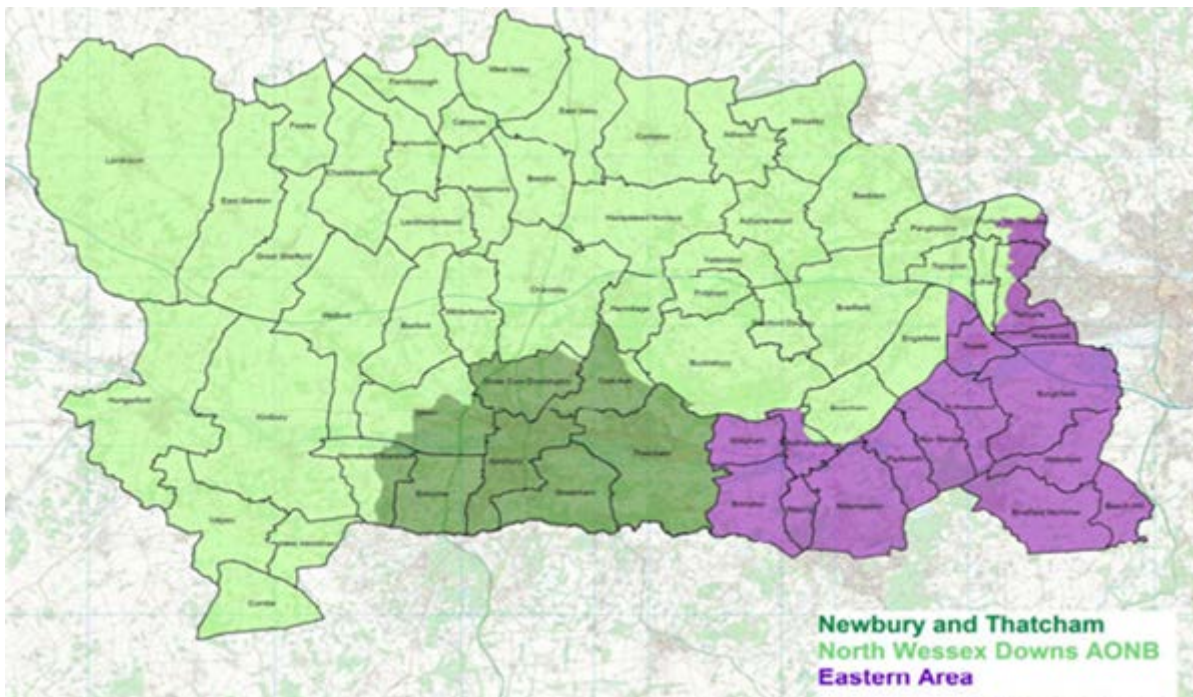
- Newbury and Thatcham. The urban areas with the highest levels of walking and cycling, lowest car ownership, and where the majority of trips are within Newbury &/or Thatcham. It is also where most new development is proposed.
- Rural areas, including villages and the town of Hungerford, falling within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB). These include 74% of the District area and

36% of the population. There are several local service centres, railway stations in the south and east of the National Landscape area, and the highest levels of working from home.

- Eastern area of the district, including Theale and Calcot, accounting for 20% of the population. Parts of the Eastern area are within the Reading Travel to Work area and a third of trips are to Reading. This area has the highest bus usage in the district.

In addition to the place types, there are fundamental aspects of the transport network, such as maintenance and strategic connectivity, that apply across the whole of West Berkshire.

The LTP therefore sets out the strategy for the transport network, as a whole, and then how transport can help achieve the vision and objectives in each of the identified place types.



Place Types in West Berkshire

Consultation

The Draft West Berkshire LTP4 Strategy Document (2024-2039) was consulted on in February 2023. There were approximately 300 responses from members of the public. A further 20 responses were received from local stakeholder groups. These included town and parish councils (Hungerford, Thatcham and Aldermaston), local modal user groups (including the British Horse Society, community rail partnerships, and West Berkshire Spokes) and Network Rail.

Three quarters of respondents agreed that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) should be updated. However, only a quarter of respondents felt that they had a good choice of travel options. The top priorities given by respondents included:

- a. Access to public transport
- b. Pedestrian facilities
- c. Clean air

The four themes and associated objectives in the draft strategy were broadly supported. Suggested changes to the draft LTP Vision and Objectives included:

- An increased focus on maintenance
- The need to provide comprehensive, rather than fragmented, cycle networks
- The similarity of many of the sustainable access objectives relating to public transport

- That there should be more explicit targets in the objectives

Place-based transport strategies were also supported, although the level of support for each place type varied. Support was highest for the strategic connections (all over 70%) and rural strategies (63-73%). Levels of agreement for the Eastern area’s strategies were between 50-60%, although when discounting those who responded, “don’t know” or “neither agree nor disagree”, there were typically five respondents in favour for every one against.

The responses from stakeholders, such as Town and Parish Councils, also included several suggestions, including:

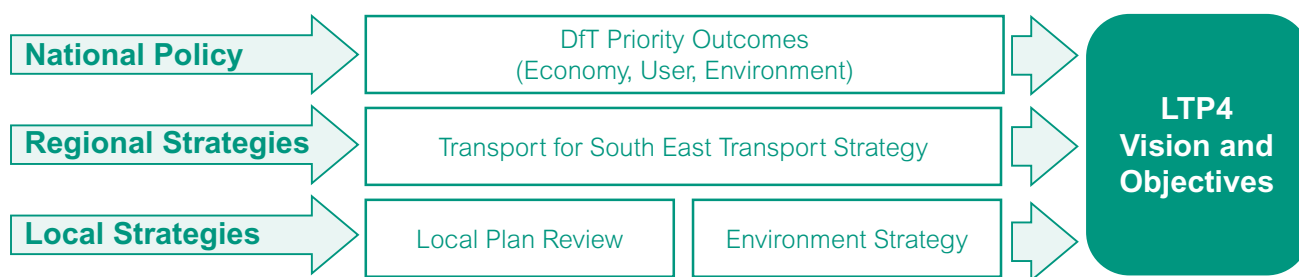
- Greater focus on maintenance of the road network to prevent pothole occurrence
- Household specific off-street parking data to inform off-street EV infrastructure
- Evening bus services
- Worsening traffic conditions near Aldermaston
- Greater emphasis on the shift from road-based to rail freight movement

The feedback received has been considered and used to develop this draft LTP4.

Place Type	Sustainable Access for All	Sustainable Growth	Decarbonising Transport	Creating Places for People
Strategic Connectivity	82%	76%	71%	-
Newbury & Thatcham	71%	66%	60%	50%
Rural areas	73%	68%	63%	73%
Eastern area	59%	56%	52%	55%

Levels of Agreement with the proposed strategies for each place type

Vision and Objectives



Overview of how National, Regional Local Policy and Strategy have informed the LTP4 Vision

The LTP has been developed around a vision that will deliver on local priorities for West Berkshire. This vision and associated objectives have been developed from national, regional and local strategies, engagement with officers and elected members in West Berkshire Council and refined to reflect feedback from public consultation

This draft vision sets out the local priorities and associated objectives that the LTP will support. These are:

- Create Places for People
- Provide Sustainable Access for All
- Decarbonise Transport
- Support Sustainable Growth

Places for People

People's health and wellbeing is at the core of the strategy. Central to this is **Vision Zero**, a target that no one should be killed or seriously injured (KSI) on the West Berkshire highway network.

Safer residential, school and town centre streets will support the creation of quieter and better places to live, encouraging people to shop, eat and stay in vibrant town centres and ensuring that children and young people can walk and cycle to school safely.

These changes will contribute to **increasing physical activity**, providing benefits to people's health, improved mental wellbeing, better concentration levels, and productivity.

Sustainable Access for All

To improve travel choices and facilitate **easier journeys**, we will increase access to public and shared transport, improve interchange at bus and railway stations, and support operators in improving the attractiveness of public transport vehicles. These changes will give residents more travel choice and access to opportunities.

The LTP will support **improved digital connectivity** and facilitate the role of technology in helping people in accessing services and transform the transport system.

The transport network is a vital asset of West Berkshire and we will continue to improve data collection and prioritisation in providing a **better maintained network**. This includes embracing technology, improving the co-ordination of the aspirations for greater active travel, and reducing the carbon impact of operating and maintaining the transport network.

Decarbonise Transport

The strategy will support the **transition of the transport sector to net zero** through a combination of infrastructure improvements and behavioural change.

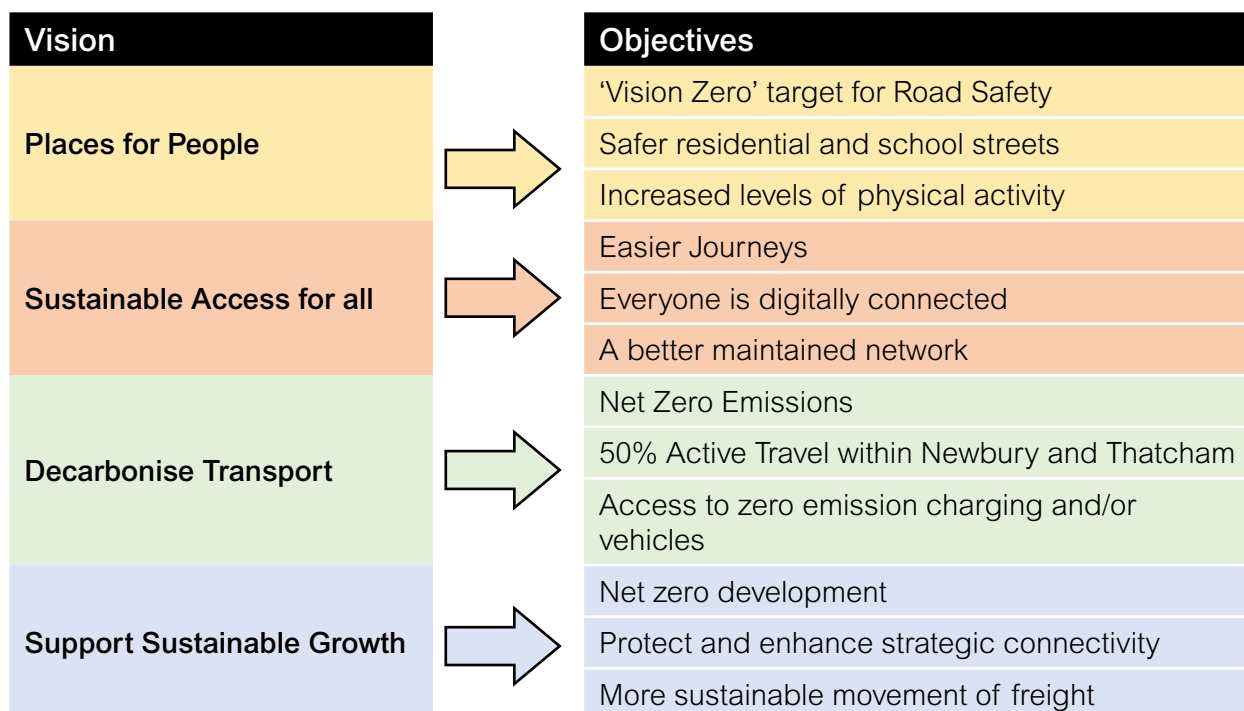
Supporting this is the objective for **50% of trips within Newbury and Thatcham being made by active travel, up from the current 35%**. Recognising that walking and cycling, or public transport, is not feasible for every trip in West Berkshire, we need cleaner fuels and the LTP will support widespread **access to zero emission charging facilities and vehicles**.

Support Sustainable Growth

The movement of people, goods and services in and through the District is vital to the economy and the LTP aims to **protect and enhance strategic connectivity**.

Alongside this, the LTP will support **more sustainable movement of freight**, including the transition to more sustainable modes and the management of freight in and through urban centres, such as Newbury and Thatcham.

The LTP will also take account of, and align with, proposals in the Local Plan to support sustainable growth, including an objective of **net zero development**.



Vision and Objectives for West Berkshire LTP4

Place Based Evidence and Strategy

The Transport Network and Strategic Connections

A reliable, well maintained and resilient transport network makes an important contribution to life in West Berkshire and its economy.

The Transport Network

The highway network in West Berkshire is expansive and diverse. The Council maintains around 1,300km (800 miles) of highway network and associated assets. This includes structures, 13,000 streetlights, 1,500 illuminated signs, 40 signalised junctions, 40 signalised crossings, highway drainage, verges and trees.

Although this network is an asset, it is expensive to maintain. Current funding is insufficient to maintain the whole network in the desired, or even current, condition and therefore investment must be prioritised on strategic routes or those that carry the most traffic.

The Council has implemented a code of practice, “Well Managed Highway Infrastructure” and will also further develop a resilient Network Plan, to maintain access during disruptive events, and a pothole strategy which will feed into a new Highway Asset Management Plan. This includes identifying those rural B roads that have the greatest strategic function and appropriately managing and treating these routes to reflect this.

Recent investment in the street lighting assets has enabled a switch to low-energy lighting.

Going forward, we will seek further opportunities to reduce the carbon emissions associated with street lighting. We will also upgrade and improve our

traffic signals to more efficient LED technology, so as to be more dynamic in responding to changing travel patterns. We will also develop asset management performance indicators, which will help monitor the condition of our network and assist in how we can reduce carbon in our maintenance operations.

Active travel is a vital component in the priorities for the Council, contributing to physical activity, health, and improving air quality by reducing carbon emissions. West Berkshire Council is responsible for over 800km of footways. To ensure that pedestrians and cyclists can move safely and comfortably, we will place greater focus on the maintenance of the active travel network. This includes:

- establishing a long-term maintenance investment strategy
- developing a set of condition targets for the cycleway network, and
- improving alignment of the carriageway and traffic signals maintenance program with enhancements to active travel facilities

The continued development of off-road multi-use routes, such as the Eling Way and Kennet and Avon Towpath, will provide attractive routes for both utility travel and leisure trips. These contribute to improving health and wellbeing, and provide a gateway experience for those new, and returning to, walking and cycling.

We will also seek to eliminate serious and fatal injuries from the highway network by applying a safe systems approach. This will be done through targeted improvements for safer roads and safer speeds that will improve safety, and through continued education and cycle training for children to encourage safer road use.

To support the new LTP and emerging Highway Asset Management Plan, spending and priorities for revenue derived from On-street Parking will be reviewed to ensure that it aligns with the new LTP and priorities for the transport network.

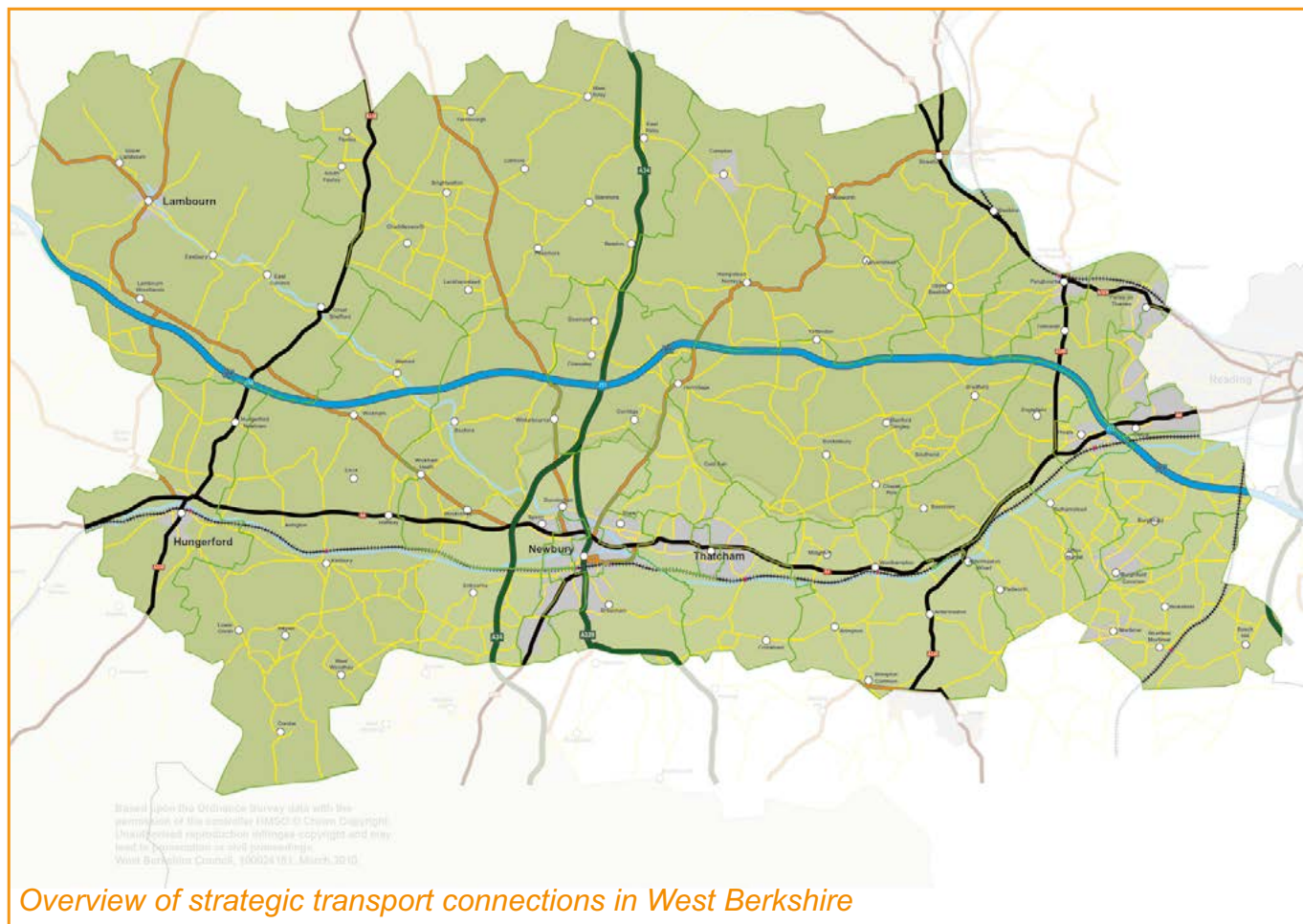
Strategic Connections

Strategic road and rail links are vital to business, freight movement and residents' ability to access jobs and amenities. The strategic routes through West Berkshire also influence the strategic connectivity to the adjacent sub-national transport body (STB) areas including England's Economic Heartland (EEH) and Western Gateway.

A34 is the busiest non-motorway trunk road in the UK with 12,000 HGV flows daily.

There are, however, some negative noise impacts and emissions associated with the strategic highway routes. When collisions occur on the M4 and A34, traffic can be displaced onto less suitable local networks and add to the negative impacts of heavy vehicles using the A339 through Newbury. The A34 corridor can also suffer from congestion, which could be alleviated by transferring freight onto rail, and insufficient lorry parking and facilities.

Transporting consumer goods more sustainably can provide local employment and help to reduce emissions, with freight



The Strategic Road Network, managed by Highways England, includes the M4 and the A34. The M4 runs east to west whereas the A34 provides a road link for freight between the ports on the south coast and the 'Golden Triangle' in the Midlands. The

trains on average emitting around a quarter of the CO2 equivalent emissions of HGVs per tonne-mile travelled. The existing Theale Rail-Road Transfer site makes an important strategic contribution to the movement of rail freight in West Berkshire. This facility will be protected



Freight Movements in West Berkshire (Source: West Berkshire Freight Strategy 2014)

and the growth of the Theale Site enabling additional and diversified transport of goods by rail will be supported.

Similarly, we will expect that all development that generates significant HGV movements will be required to show that practicable means have been explored to make use of rail as opposed to road for the transport of goods.

In addition to the Strategic Road Network (SRN), many roads on the local highway network support strategic and longer distance connectivity. The A4 running east to west connects to Reading in the east and Bristol in the west. The A339, running north to south, connects M4 J13 to Basingstoke and the M3 in the south and the A340 from the A4 to the north, through Aldermaston and to Baughurst, the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) and onto Basingstoke in the south. The A339 and A4 are both also important routes for interurban bus travel. We will work with transport providers and local businesses to provide more evening bus services.

Rail services from Newbury and Thatcham provide direct connections to Reading and London Paddington. Local stations on the Reading to Taunton Line at Hungerford, Kintbury, Aldermaston and Midgham and at Mortimer on the Reading to Basingstoke line provide for local journeys, with interchange to other rail routes at

larger stations, including improved travel opportunities created by the Elizabeth Line to Reading. There are also well-utilised local services stopping at Tilehurst, Pangbourne and Goring and Streatley on the Great Western Main Line, which runs north-south along the eastern edge of West Berkshire.

Demand had been growing on the rail network. However, patronage was significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic and, while there has been some recovery, in 23/24 rail trips in West Berkshire were approximately 25% below pre pandemic levels.

To improve local connections, we will work with operators and the rail industry to replace the current hourly Paddington to Newbury and Newbury to Bedwyn services with a single Paddington to Bedwyn service. Longer term, the aspiration is for the current Newbury to Reading train to be extended to London Paddington. This would provide two trains per hour for Newbury, Thatcham and Theale to London and access to other stations. Extending this service further west would also open up new travel opportunities and provide new connections into the south-west.

The strategy for the transport network and strategic connection is set out in more detail below.

The Transport Network and Strategic Connections Strategy

Places for People

- Delivery of local safety and collision reduction measures
- 20mph limits and quieter residential areas where residents want it
- Promote safe road use through education campaigns
- Safer access to schools' including idle-free zones & cycle training for children
- Develop a long-term maintenance investment strategy for active travel
- Better align forward maintenance program to deliver active travel opportunities.
- Delivery of new and improving existing regional cycleways, including extension of Eling Way from Hermitage towards Newbury and from Hampstead Norreys to Compton
- Improve access to and upgrade the Kennet & Avon Canal Towpath

Sustainable Access for all

- Enhance bus frequency to every 15-minutes between Newbury-Thatcham-Reading
- Enhance bus services between Newbury and Basingstoke
- Service improvements to stations on the Great Western Main Line
- Increased service frequency through and from Newbury railway station
- Explore expansion of concessionary fare travel scheme for those most in need
- Support development of Mobility as a service (MaaS)
- Maintain the network in good condition and fix potholes the first time

- Identify and develop a resilient network plan for a range of highly disruptive events
- Develop asset management performance indicators
- Continue to remove stiles, barriers and restrictive infrastructure on the Rights of Way.
- Improved PROW mapping and information to support all users to make route choices.

Decarbonising Transport

- Work with partners to reduce noise and environmental impacts of M4 and A34
- Work with partners to identify ways of increasing the use of rail freight and encourage a shift from road-borne freight to help lower emissions
- Upgrade and enhance traffic signals across West Berkshire
- Reduce carbon emissions of street lighting and highway maintenance

Support Sustainable Growth

- A339 Newbury to Basingstoke and Junction and Safety Enhancements
- Protect the use of and promote growth of Theale Strategic Rail Freight Terminal
- Development that generates significant HGV movements will be required to show that practical means have been explored to make use of rail for the transport of goods
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity through new approaches to delivery
- New &/or enhanced bus services serving new developments across the District

Newbury and Thatcham

Newbury and Thatcham are the **largest urban areas** in West Berkshire and home to approximately 40% of the district's population.

There are multiple schools, retailers, services and major employment sites, including Vodafone UK HQ, Newbury Racecourse, Stryker, West Berkshire Council and West Berkshire Community Hospital. These jobs and services not only provide for local residents, but also those from a wider catchment including rural communities to the south in Hampshire.

50% of Newbury and Thatcham residents work at a location within the two towns. Reflecting that these are short distances, walking and cycling already accounts for a third of these trips rising to almost half within Thatcham.

The historic urban environment means there is **little to scope to build additional highway capacity** within Newbury and Thatcham. The focus of the transport strategy for these areas will therefore be to increase sustainable travel and maximise the efficiency of the existing network. Doing so will also help to increase physical activity, reduce road traffic casualties, enhance the quality of streets and improve the health of residents.

These aspirations are reflected in setting a target for **50% of trips within Newbury and Thatcham to be made by walking and cycling, up from the current 35%.**

- Increased town centre pedestrianisation and improved crossing provision in the town centres
- Less traffic at lower speeds through an increased number of 20mph streets

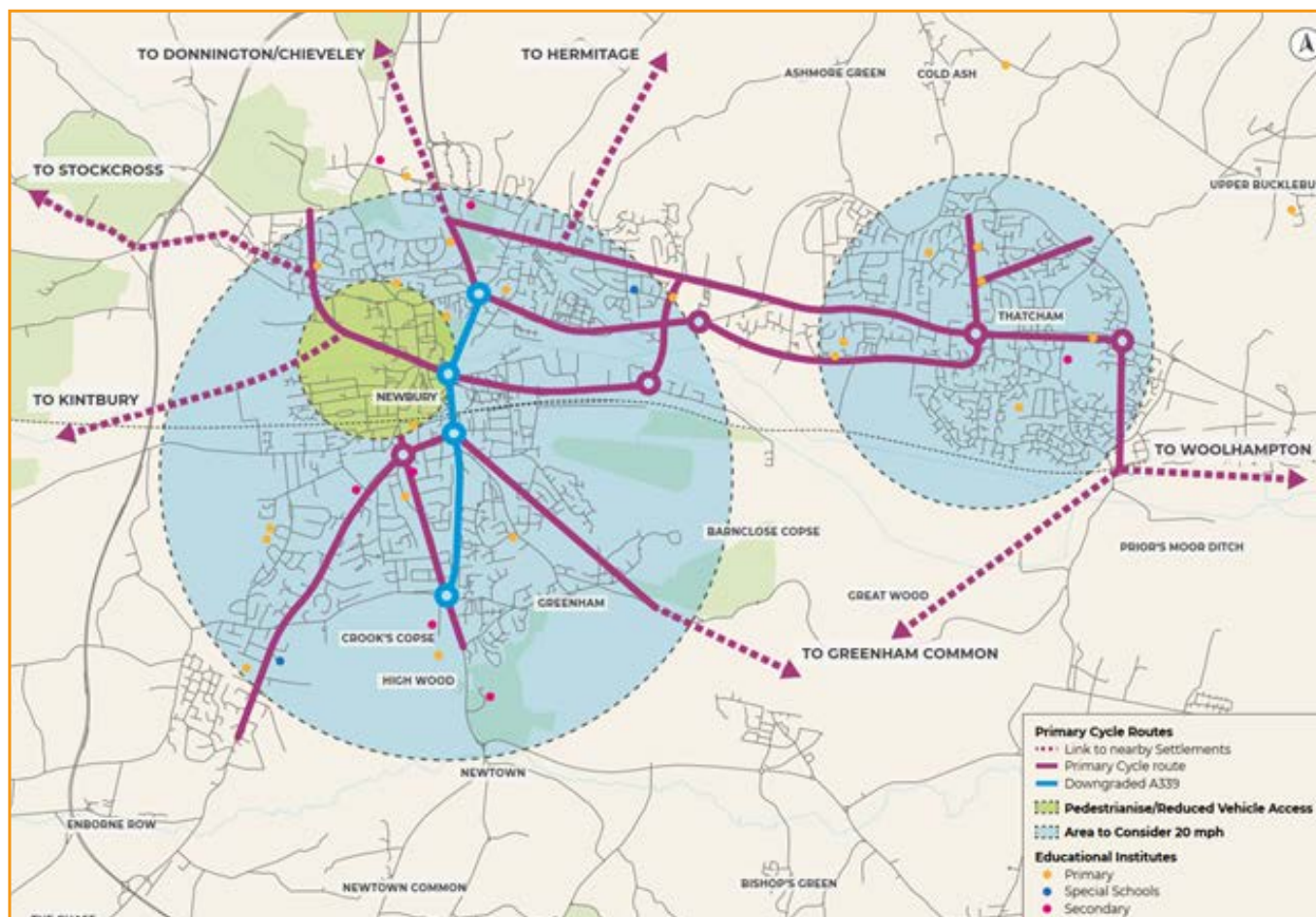
- A network of segregated and/or low-traffic cycle routes in Newbury and Thatcham
- Improving walking and cycling links to and from surrounding settlements
- Trial an on-street e-scooter rental scheme

The West Berkshire LCWIP identifies Newbury and Thatcham as core walking zones. Reducing the dominance of vehicles, speeds and extending town centre pedestrianisation will help to enhance safety and a sense of place for people on foot. A more attractive urban centre that encourages people to visit and dwell will, in turn, boost business.

Key to enabling more residents to walk and cycle will be a joined-up network of safe and attractive walking and cycling routes. We will prioritise corridors with the highest potential number of active travellers and linking into existing schemes. This includes east-west routes between Newbury and Thatcham, a north-south route in Newbury and improving access to education facilities, such as those on Newtown Road.

To accelerate the rate of change, and drawing on local suggestions, we will trial and test changes to streets. This is a dynamic and cost-effective way of delivering changes to the transport network. It can give people first-hand experience of the actual, rather than perceived impacts and improve road safety, active travel provision, and enables residents to quickly experience the shift in quality of place.

Supplementing the network within Newbury and Thatcham, we will also deliver improved links between Newbury and Thatcham, to surrounding settlements, to



Indicative aspirational active travel network map for Newbury and Thatcham

new development, including Donnington/Chieveley, Kintbury and the Eling Way at Hermitage. Nearby, Greenham Common also provides a popular traffic-free environment for leisure cycling and way for new and lapsed cyclists to access improved active travel networks that connect into it.

Looking forward, the **Local Plan Review** includes significant new development at Sandford Park, south of Newbury, and at north-east Thatcham. Although these will create new travel demands, improvements to transport infrastructure within, to and from these developments can improve and expand existing active travel, public and shared transport networks.

Running north to south through the centre of Newbury is the A339. Traffic volumes on the A339 are more than double the next busiest road in Newbury. However, the design of the road, junctions and

traffic volumes are out of keeping for an urban area and result in severance. Use by HGVs also has a negative impact on the local environment. Options to change the nature of this road in support of the strategy objectives will also be explored. This could include changes to speed limits, signage and character of the A339 through Newbury.

The level crossing at Thatcham Railway station can lead to delays on the adjacent road network. Options for the crossing will be reviewed with stakeholders; this could include exploring a way in which funding could be secured for a bridge crossing.

Car ownership is lower in Newbury and Thatcham than the rest of the District with approximately 1 in 6 households in Newbury and Thatcham not owning a car, rising to 1 in 4 in some areas. National data also shows each individual vehicle is being used less.

This suggests owning a car is not as essential as in other parts of the district. With a growing ability to also access some services digitally, people may consider the sharing of transport resources, which is now commonplace in some other sectors, e.g. accommodation and Airbnb. There are currently a handful of car club vehicles within Newbury, from which a network can be developed to provide a **shared vehicle within walking distance of each resident of Newbury**. Where feasible, these will be changed to zero emission vehicles in the next five years.

An on-street e-scooter hire scheme – subject to legislation and an operator – would further increase travel choice, particularly to the destinations such as the town centres, hospital, railway stations and racecourse. Along with shared cars these would give more residents a cost-effective alternative to car ownership.

Electric vehicle uptake in the district is above the national average and there are several publicly available EV chargers across Newbury and Thatcham. There are, however, locations with limited off-road parking where on-street provision is likely to be needed to support increased EV uptake. This could be aligned with the provision of shared electric vehicles.

Public transport has an important role in enabling residents to access destinations outside of the District, particularly for travel to Reading and London. There is a new bus station in Newbury and three railway stations including Newbury, Newbury Racecourse and Thatcham.

There are commercial and supported bus services in Newbury and Thatcham. Reading Buses operate commercial services between Newbury, Thatcham and Reading seven days a week from early morning until late evening. There are several Newbury town services, where additional evening and/Sunday services would improve travel options for residents. Other bus services are less frequent, with two-hourly or daily services connecting Newbury and Thatcham with surrounding villages and rural areas.

Access and interchange at Newbury station has recently been upgraded. Facilities at, and access by sustainable modes to, Thatcham station are more limited. We will seek to enhance interchange and parking facilities, including by bus and the potential for cycle hubs at both Thatcham and Newbury Racecourse railway stations.



Electric Vehicle Charging and Car Club Vehicle

Strategy for Newbury and Thatcham

50% of trips made by walking, safer streets and a network of shared vehicles,

Places for People - 50% of trips within Newbury and Thatcham made by walking and cycling

- Zero pedestrians and cyclists fatally or seriously injured in Newbury and Thatcham
- Improve access to cycling, including greater access to storage facilities
- Deliver a core strategic cycle network in and between Newbury and Thatcham
- Trial extensions to Newbury Town Centre pedestrianisation
- Create quieter and safer urban streets for residents, pedestrians and cyclists.
- 20mph limits and quieter residential areas where residents want it
- Improve attractiveness and safety of walking and cycling routes to schools
- Test and trial access changes, prioritising pedestrian and cycle movements, thus reducing the dominance of car traffic in urban centres
- Improve walking and cycling links to Greenham Common and to the Eling Way
- Support a trial for on-street eScooter hire scheme
- Employer, school and residential travel planning programmes.

Sustainable Access for all

- Zero emission public or shared transport within 400m of every house in Newbury
- Expand car club network into Thatcham

- 15-minute bus frequency and extra evening services between Newbury and Thatcham
- Improvements to bus services and journey times in Newbury
- Upgrade of interchange and facilities at Thatcham and Newbury Racecourse stations
- Trial of gritting active travel routes in winter

Decarbonise Transport

- Zero emission buses in Newbury and Thatcham and along the A4 to Reading
- EV infrastructure aligned with the expansion of a shared mobility network and in areas with limited off-street parking
- Reduction of traffic movements in Newbury and Thatcham
- Reduce through traffic movements, particularly HGVs on A339

Support Sustainable Growth

- Provide zero and low carbon travel options within and serving all new developments in Newbury and Thatcham, including contributions through the planning system towards enhancing bus services, increasing car clubs and walking and cycling routes towards enhancing bus services
- Create a high-quality active travel link between Sandleford Park, Newbury Town Centre, Thatcham Town Centre, north-east Thatcham and railway stations
- Trial of minibus service from north-east Thatcham to the railway station
- Improve the operation of and reduce the impact of freight in town centres
- Promote the use of e-cargo bikes

Villages and Rural Areas

The Villages and Rural areas include the North Wessex Downs National Landscapes to the north, northwest and southwest of the district. Covering three quarters of the area of West Berkshire, the villages and rural areas are home to just over a third of the population.

Their rural nature is reflected by more limited services and facilities. The services, shops and amenities that do exist are typically located in the town of Hungerford and villages, such as Lambourn, Pangbourne and to a lesser extent Kintbury and Chieveley.

Travel destinations are similar across most of the area, with 60% of employment trips to locations within West Berkshire. A quarter of commutes start and end within the same ward and walking and cycling accounts for 30% of these local trips.

The M4 and A34 run through the National Landscape area and provide excellent connectivity by car, particularly for those living in the vicinity of junction 13 (Hermitage/Newbury) and junction 14 (Hungerford/Lambourn) on the M4 and on the A34 respectively. With good highway access and most households having access to two or more cars, the private vehicle is likely to remain the most popular means of transport for residents in these areas.

Sustainable travel options, particularly public transport are more limited in the villages and rural areas. As a result, travel by car, digital access and walking and cycling for local trips play the greatest role in accessing facilities.

The focus of the strategy in rural areas is therefore focused upon:

- Provision and promotion of electric vehicle charging facilities
- Supporting improvement of facilities in rural towns and villages centres

- Improving walking and cycling facilities, and trialling local priorities

Reducing the environmental impact of travel will be primarily through cleaner vehicles. With low population density, it will be challenging to deliver a large public charging network. Therefore, there will be a need to provide more innovative ways of increasing access to EV charging and the sharing of resources. We will provide support to increase awareness of a range of charging options including **community and peer-to-peer charging**.

Digital access and home working are most prevalent in this part of West Berkshire. In 2011, up to 15% of people living in the North Wessex Downs AONB (now, National Landscape) worked from home. Home working levels have risen significantly since then, (over 40% across West Berkshire in the 2021 census), reflecting the changing nature of how people organise their work. It is important that we recognise the popularity of this part of the district as a place to live, from which people are no longer travelling to work as much as they once did. Greater working from home does increase daytime population in the rural areas, which can support local business in these locations.

We will support communities to build upon these changes. We will enable communities to run seasonal events and **trial different highway and access layouts**. Additional transport facilities including electric vehicle charging, secure cycle parking facilities and, where feasible, car-pooling and/or car clubs will be provided in rural centres and help to support their role as a local hub with a range of facilities.

Footway provision can be missing alongside the highway network in rural areas. Lack of facilities and vehicle speeds can be intimidating to some users. Cyclists and many horse riders

use vehicle carriageways, particularly in the surrounds of Lambourn, which has a large racehorse training and rehabilitation centre. Improvements to these, alongside improving Public Rights of Way could improve access and the attractiveness of recreational walking.

The **Eling Way** from Hermitage to Hampstead Norreys provides an attractive off-road route for recreational travel. We will continue to work to deliver sections of this to create a route to Newbury to the south and Compton, and beyond to the north. We will also identify options for, and subject to funding deliver, an active travel route from Chieveley to Donnington.

However, new dedicated active travel infrastructure is expensive and can take time to deliver. Therefore, to grow the

network of safer routes we will also **trial locally proposed changes to increase the network of low traffic routes for walking, cycling and horse riding**. These could provide safer routes to schools, links between settlements or attractive local routes that support increased recreation and improve quality of life. Suggestions will be sought from communities, trialled and/or delivered at low cost to grow a network of safe routes.

There are two rail corridors through the area with stations at Hungerford and Kintbury on the Reading to Taunton line and at Pangbourne and, just outside the district, at Goring and Streatley on the Reading to Oxford line. These stations typically have an hourly service with at least two services per hour in the peaks. Pangbourne and Streatley have a high

Case Study: Eling Way, Hampstead Norreys to Hermitage

February 2020 saw the opening of the initial 3-kilometre section of the Eling Way multi-user path, providing a traffic-free link for considerate cycling, horse-riding, walking and wheeling between the villages of Hampstead Norreys and Hermitage, following part of the former Didcot to Newbury railway mainly over land owned by Eling Estate. The initiative spurred from early work by local cycling organisation West Berkshire Spokes and was delivered through partnership working involving West Berkshire Council, National Highways, Eling Estate, Hermitage and Hampstead Norreys Parish Councils, Sustrans and Spokes. The route is well-used with sensors logging 185 pedestrians and 40 cyclists using the route in a typical 12-hour period.



There are local aspirations - reflected in the Hermitage Neighbourhood Plan - to extend the Eling Way north and south, to give a sustainable alternative for local travel between villages including Hermitage, Curridge and Compton, and the main towns of Newbury and ultimately Didcot.

draw towards Reading and improving interchange facilities and the first and last mile of trips could further help to encourage the use of rail within these local areas and help patronage recover following the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there are some community transport operators, there are typically limited bus services to some of the villages. We will work with partners to use service demand responsive transport applications to deliver efficient bus services. **Demand Responsive Transport** (DRT) will help to offer a service in:

- Western rural areas between Hungerford and Lambourn and
- Areas east of Thatcham and west of Reading (Thatcham Connect)
- A new DRT to serve villages in the east, including Pangbourne and Streatley.

Strategy for the villages and Rural Areas:

Go Electric, support key centres and grow the network of safer walking and cycling routes

Places for People

- Promote town and village centres, including trial of events/ temporary highway changes to support the vitality of rural villages and local centres and car parking incentives.
- Upgrade of footways connecting attractions and main local centres.
- Delivery of new and improving existing regional cycleways, including extension of Eling Way from Hermitage towards Newbury and from Hampstead Norreys to Compton.
- Develop walking, cycling and equestrian routes around settlements (“community circuits”).
- Trial of ‘green lanes’ including locally led proposals for safer walking and

cycling access to public transport, schools and expanding the network for walking, cycling and horse riding.

- Secured cycle parking, adapted cycle parking and motorcycle parking at local destinations.

Sustainable Access for all

- Seek enhanced rail service frequency to at least 30-min frequency to Pangbourne, Goring and Streatley, Hungerford and Kintbury stations.
- Improve facilities and/or interchange at Hungerford Station and Pangbourne Station.
- Implementation of Demand Responsive Transport services connecting local centres to the wider public transport network.

Decarbonising Transport

- EV charging and shared mobility at rural hubs, starting with Lambourn and Hungerford, and explore expanding into other areas such as Chieveley and Streatley.
- Provision of charging points and promotion of peer-to-peer charging networks.
- Continue improving rural broadband and digital connectivity.
- Upgrade of public transport fleet to reduce emissions and provide mobile office capability.
- Work with National Highways to explore measures to reduce noise pollution and carbon emissions associated with the M4 and A34.

Sustainable Growth

- Improve active and shared travel and zero emission vehicle facilities supporting appropriate and sustainable new developments.
- Seek through new development to expand the network for walking and cycling.

Eastern Area

The Eastern Area is the second largest place type identified and includes 20% of the district's population.

The areas adjoining Reading are typically more urbanised, particularly Calcot and Theale, with a higher density of residential houses, healthcare, education, retail and employment services. Areas to the west in the vicinity of the A4 and to the south are more rural in nature.

The A4 is the main transport corridor running east through this area connecting Newbury, Thatcham, the Eastern Area and Reading. At the western end of the A4 the majority of travel is towards Newbury and Thatcham, but this shifts to a greater draw to Reading as you travel east along the A4. Bus services run half-hourly along the A4 and broadly parallel to the A4 corridor are the NCN 4 and Newbury to Reading railway line. The A340 runs from the A4 south through the villages of Aldermaston Wharf and Aldermaston and north from Theale to Pangbourne.

Although a few local amenities are located to the north of A4, residents typically have

access to a wider range of amenities south of A4 due to its proximity to villages including Mortimer, Aldermaston, and Burghfield Common. There is also greater interaction with settlements outside West Berkshire that residents may travel to for services and vice-versa.

Both the A4 and A340 can dominate the local environment. We will work with communities to reduce the impact of traffic and enhance active travel routes along and/or in vicinity of these corridors, particularly where improvements increase access to public transport or the existing canal side routes.

Over 50% of households in the Eastern area have access to two or more cars. Car is the most common travel choice, with more people in the Eastern area commuting by car than those residents in rural areas of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. A shift to cleaner forms of vehicle propulsion will be central to reducing transport emission from residents in the Eastern areas, particularly those in more rural parts of this area.



M4 Junction 12 with A4 Junction and pedestrian/cycle bridge over M4 in background

Theale, Burghfield Common and Mortimer have sites allocated for housing development as part of the Local Plan which could support and enhance local transport networks.

Parts of the Eastern Area fall within the Reading city region and there is a large draw towards Reading for jobs and services. We will work with Reading Council to improve facilities along main transport corridors and explore opportunities to align with emerging mobility opportunities that are progressed within Reading.

The Eastern area benefits from several frequent bus services, with Reading Buses providing services from Mortimer, Calcot, Purley-on-Thames and Tilehurst. These services operate from early morning until late evening seven days a week. Service 26 (Reading – Calcot) operates a 24-hour service.

Despite the relatively close proximity to Reading, a low level of trips is made by sustainable modes with public transport accounting for just 20% of trips. In comparison, approximately 30% of trips from Newbury and Thatcham to Reading are made by public transport. Trips could be captured outside the urban areas with improved interchanges and the upgrading of public transport corridors throughout the Eastern Area and into Reading.

Similarly, parts of the Eastern Area are within cyclable distance to much of Reading and cycle route improvements to the A329 and A4, including the Theale Connector over the M4, are identified as strategic cycle corridors in the Reading Area LCWIP.

There are four railway stations in the Eastern area, including Midgham, Aldermaston, Theale and Mortimer. There is also a station serving Tilehurst, although this is over the district boundary within Reading. Theale and Tilehurst are the busiest of these stations, and current improvements to Theale station will improve accessibility and car parking.

Mortimer, Aldermaston and Midgham railway stations have lower service provision and comparatively modest usage, but nevertheless provide an attractive facility for local journeys. Mortimer also serves a larger rural catchment. Interchange facilities are limited, but there is potential to improve bus/rail interchange if bus services to the station were enhanced.



A340 at Aldermaston (Left) and Theale Rail Station (right)

Strategy for the Eastern Area

Enhancing links to Reading, improving public transport and priorities for rural centres.

Places for People

- Reduce the dominance of vehicles and support improved public realm and place making improvements in local centres.
- Improve attractiveness and safety of walking and cycling routes to schools.
- Secured cycle parking, adapted cycle parking and motorcycle parking at local destinations.
- Support the extension of the Reading local cycle network, including the A329 sustainable travel corridor, and local connections into existing and planned strategic cycle routes.
- Support and collaborate with Reading Borough Council on proposals that could introduce micro-mobility hire schemes into parts of the Eastern area.

Sustainable Access for all

- Completion of improvements to Theale station.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle links to and interchanges at railway stations, including shared vehicles, EV charging and cycle parking.
- M4 / A4 interchange hub offering transfer onto sustainable travel choices (to Reading).
- Improvements to active travel and bus journey times on A4 across/in the vicinity of M4 J12.

- New Demand Responsive Transport services to serve villages in the east of the district.
- Work with partners to use the service Demand Responsive Transport applications to deliver efficient bus services.

Decarbonising Transport

- Support the provision of EV infrastructure in areas with limited off-street parking, particularly around Theale, Mortimer and Burghfield Common.
- Promotion of peer-to-peer electric charging networks.
- Support operators and adjacent authorities with the transition to zero-emission buses.
- Collaborate in supporting partners and innovators in developing solutions for decarbonising transport, including with existing and emerging proposals for Reading.

Sustainable Growth

- Support the development of a Theale strategic rail freight Interchange.
- Use the planning process and other investment opportunities to deliver attractive and direct walking and cycling links, access to public and / or shared transport and EV chargers to support net zero developments.
- Trial new measures and / or network changes to accelerate the process for expanding the active travel network and decarbonising the transport network.

LTP Action Plan: The Transport Network

Place	Objectives	Measures
The Transport Network	“Vision Zero” target for road safety	Road safety Educational campaigns
		Local Safety and collision reduction programme
		20mph for streets where residents want it
		Speed Limit Review on routes with a history of collisions
	Safer residential, school and town centre streets	Development and implementation of School Streets across West Berkshire
		Delivery of cycle confidence sessions for children
		Test and trial access changes to reduce dominance of vehicles, create safer streets and Green Lanes
	Increase Physical Activity	Upgrade of Kennet & Avon Canal towpath
		Consolidate the definitive ROWIP map and statement by 2030
		Improve signage of pedestrian and cycles route to key destinations
		Active Travel Maintenance Investment strategy, including process for aligning maintenance with active travel aspirations
	Net zero emissions	Reduce carbon emissions from street lighting and maintenance operations
		Rolling programme of Traffic signals renewal and upgrade
	Access to zero emission charging and/or vehicles	Provision of EV infrastructure in areas with limited off-street parking and local service centres
		Use of the planning system to promote EV charge point delivery
		Promote use of Peer-to Peer Charging Networks
	A better maintained Network	Enhance Public Rights of Way, recreational routes and community circuits
		Use of the planning system to promote active and sustainable travel infrastructure
		Develop Asset Management Performance Indicators
		Identify Rural Priority network
		Develop a Resilient Network Plan

Place	Objectives	Measures
The Transport Network	Easier Journeys	Annual programme of on street cycle & motorcycle parking
		Service Improvements along the Great Western Main Line
		Trial 30-minutes bus frequency between Oxford- Newbury - Basingstoke
		Feasibility study for freight management and micro mobility
	Access to public and shared transport	Improvements to minibus Fleet
		Funding for Community Transport
		Additional services on West Berkshire contracted bus service network
Newbury and Thatcham	Protect and enhance strategic connectivity	A339 Newbury to Basingstoke and Junction and Safety Enhancements
	Net zero development	New &/or enhanced bus services to serve new development across West Berkshire
		Attractive walking and cycling links, access to public/ shared transport and EV chargers in new developments through the planning system
	Safer residential, school and town centre streets	Extension of Pedestrianisation in Newbury Town Centre
	50% active travel: Active Travel Network	A4 corridor strategic cycle route between Newbury & Thatcham
		Andover Road corridor between Wash Common and Newbury town centre
		Newtown Road traffic reduction
		Park Lane Traffic Reduction
		Newbury to Greenham Common, active travel and crossing improvements
		Changes to road layout and provision of cycle facilities from Fox & Hounds to Donnington and North Newbury development
		Trail of e-scooter rental scheme
	Access to public and shared transport	Development of network of shared vehicles
	Easier Journeys	Upgrade interchange facilities at Thatcham station
		Upgrade facilities at Newbury Racecourse station
		Robin Hood Roundabout enhancements
		Evening services on “Jet Black” buses between Newbury and Thatcham
		A4 Bath Road, bus priority at traffic lights

Place	Objectives	Measures
Newbury and Thatcham	A better maintained Network	Trial of gritting active travel routes in winter
		Town Centre freight management strategy
	Net zero development	Active travel link between Sandford Park to Newbury Town Centre
		Active travel link between Thatcham Town Centre/ railway station and north-east Thatcham
		Enhanced bus services to Donnington Heights/Vodafone Campus
Villages and Rural Areas	Safer residential, school and town centre streets	Area wide Travel Planning for strategic Developments
		Access and pedestrian/cycle crossing improvements in Local Centres
	Increase Physical Activity	Make permanent successful green lane and local measure trials
		Eling Way: Hermitage to Newbury
		Active Travel Link from Curridge to Hermitage
Eastern Area	Safer residential, school and town centre streets	Chieveley to Donnington/Fox and Hounds Active Travel Route upgrade
		Demand Responsive Transport in north west of West Berkshire
	Increased level of physical activity	Promote use of Liftshare
		Local speed limit and calming at Aldermaston
		Speed limit change pilot in Theale
Eastern Area	Easier Journeys	Local connections and crossing improvements into Reading strategic cycle network
		Royal Avenue Crossing
		Replacement of M4 footbridge at Theale
	Access to public and shared transport	Completion of Theale Station Enhancements
		Work with Reading to deliver improvements to access and facilities at Tilehurst Station
Eastern Area	Access to public and shared transport	New Demand Responsive Transport services to serve villages in the east of West Berkshire
		Promote use of Liftshare



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Produced in partnership with



WBC/PP&C/AG/0725

Monitoring Officer's Annual Report 2024/25 - Conduct and Ethics

Committee considering report:	Council
Date of Committee:	Thursday 17 July 2025
Portfolio Member:	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Communications
Date Head of Service agreed report:	19 June 2025
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	19 June 2025
Report Author:	Nicola Thomas

1 Purpose of the Report

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

2 Recommendation

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

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial issues arising from this report. However the costs associated with external investigations may lead to a budget pressure.
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	There are no legal issues arising from this report. The matters covered by this report are generally requirements of the Local Government Act 2000 in so far as appropriate and the Localism Act 2011 and its supporting regulations.

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

Council Strategy Priorities:		X		
Core Business:		X		
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	Finance and Governance Group Governance Committee Sarah Clarke, Interim Executive Director (Resources) Cllr Jeff Brooks, Leader			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report is the Monitoring Officer's annual report which will be presented to Full Council on 17 July. The report will also be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils.
- 4.2 The key findings identified in the report are:
- (a) Standards of ethical conduct across the district remain good.
 - (b) The number of gifts and hospitality declared by officers is on a par with pre-Covid numbers, although there has been a reduction in the number of gifts declared by Members.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

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

Background

- 5.3 During the Municipal Year 2024/25, the Governance Committee was comprised of eleven members (nine District Councillors appointed on a proportional basis and two co-opted non-voting Parish/ Town Councillors).

- 5.4 The Advisory Panel comprised ten Members: two from the Liberal Democrat Party, two from the Conservative Party, two from the Minority Group, two parish/town councillors and two Independent Persons. However, it should be noted that from 1 April 2025, Council agreed that standards complaints would no longer be considered via the Advisory Panel. Consequently, this Panel no longer exists.
- 5.5 The Members Code of Conduct governs the standards of conduct expected of elected Councillors, and this is supported by a number of documents including:
- Terms of Reference for the Governance Committee;
 - Gifts and Hospitality Protocol;
 - Complaints procedures for breaches of the Code of Conduct;
 - Dispensations procedure;
 - Social Media Protocol.

Further details can be found in the [Constitution](#).

Independent Persons

- 5.6 Under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a duty to ensure that it has appointed at least one Independent Person who is consulted before it makes a decision on an allegation it has determined to investigate. It was agreed by Council that the Independent Person may be consulted directly either by the person who has made the complaint or the person the complaint has been made about. Three Independent Persons have therefore been appointed in order to ensure that a conflict situation does not arise.
- 5.7 A person is not considered to be "independent" if:-
- They are or have been, within the last five years, an elected or co-opted Member or officer of the Council or of any Parish Councils within this area. This also applies to committees or sub-committees of the various Councils.
 - They are a relative or close friend of a current elected, or co-opted, Member or officer of the Council or any Parish Council within its area, or any elected or co-opted member of any committee or sub-committee.
 - The definition of relative includes the candidate's spouse, civil partner, grandparent, child etc.
- 5.8 Council appointed Mike Wall MBE, Alan Penrith and Lindsey Appleton as the Council's Independent Persons for the 2024/25 Municipal Year. All three Independent Persons have agreed to remain as Independent Persons for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.
- 5.9 The Council is asked to recognise the significant contribution of the Independent Persons and thank them for their ongoing contributions.

Governance Committee

- 5.10 The overall purpose of the Governance Committee is to provide effective challenge across the Council and independent assurance on the risk management and governance framework and associated internal control environment to members and

the public, independently of the Executive. The Governance Committee is also responsible for receiving the annual Audit Letter and for signing off the Council's final accounts.

5.11 The Committee is also charged with promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the Council. They promote, educate and support Councillors (both District and Parish) in following the highest standards of conduct and ensuring that those standards are fully owned locally. The roles and functions of the Governance Committee are set out in the Constitution (Part 2 Articles of the Constitution).

5.12 The Governance Committee has a special responsibility regarding the 55 Town and Parish Councils within the District. It is responsible for ensuring that high standards of conduct are met within the parishes and that all Parish and Town Councillors are aware of their responsibilities under their Codes of Conduct.

5.13 The District Councillors are therefore supported on the Governance Committee by up to two co-opted Parish Councillors who are appointed in a non-voting capacity, along with substitute councillors. During 2024/25 the Governance Committee included the following Parish Councillors:

- David Southgate (co-opted non-voting Parish Councillor)
- Anne Budd (substitute co-opted non-voting Parish Councillor)

5.14 In order to support the effective work of the Committee and provide independent input into meetings, the Governance Committee is entitled to also appoint up to two co-opted but non-voting Independent Persons (Audit). In 2024/25, the Independent Person (Audit) was performed by Simon Carey.

5.15 The Council is asked to recognise the contribution of the Parish Councillors and thank them for their contributions.

Advisory Panel

5.16 Until 31 March 2025, the Advisory Panel was responsible for dealing with complaints where evidence of a breach of the Code had been investigated by an independent investigator. The Advisory Panel considered the investigators report. The views of the Advisory Panel were reported to the Governance Committee, which makes the formal decision in respect of any allegations which have been investigated where it is considered that a breach of the relevant code of conduct has occurred.

5.17 The District Councillors on the Advisory Panel were representatives of all three political groups within the Council and were not appointed in accordance with the proportionality rules. During 2024/25 the Advisory Panel comprised the following District Councillors:

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

5.18 During the 2024/25 Municipal Year the following Parish Councillor was appointed to the Advisory Panel:

- Anne Budd

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

The Monitoring Officer

5.20 The Monitoring Officer is a statutory post and in West Berkshire rests with the Service Director Strategy & Governance. The Monitoring Officer (Sarah Clarke) in 2024/25 was supported by two deputies (Nicola Thomas, and Sharon Armour). The Monitoring Officer has a key role in promoting and maintaining standards of conduct. The Monitoring Officer also has a statutory responsibility to establish and maintain a register of interests for members and co-opted members of the authority. The Monitoring Officer acts as legal adviser to the Governance Committee.

5.21 The Monitoring Officer, under delegated authority, granted a dispensation to all West Berkshire Councillors in 2024/25 to speak and vote on any items pertaining to Council Tax.

Local Assessment of Complaints against Councillors

5.22 Quarter 1 – 2024/25

During this period two District Councillor complaints were received and rejected by the Monitoring Officer as in both cases, the complainants had failed to provide enough information to base a decision on and the complaints were too trivial to warrant further action.

5.23 Quarter 2 – 2024/25

During this period two complaints were received and processed by the Monitoring Officer. One of the complaints (NDC09/24) pertained to a District Councillor. Following the initial assessment, it was agreed that the complaint be referred for informal resolution. This informal resolution took the form of a public apology given by the subject member.

Complaint NPC10/24 pertained to a Parish Councillor and following the initial assessment it was agreed that no further action be taken on the complaint.

5.24 Quarter 3 - 2023/24

During this period four complaints were received and processed by the Monitoring Officer. Three of the complaints (NDC11/24, NDC12/24 and NDC14/24) pertained to District Councillors. Following the initial assessments of each of these complaints it was agreed that no further action should be taken on them.

A complaint (NPC13/24) was also processed in relation to a Parish Councillor. Following the initial assessment, it was agreed that no further action should be taken on the complaint.

5.25 Quarter 4 - 2023/24

During this period one complaint was received and processed by the Monitoring Officer which pertained to a Parish Councillor (NPC01/25). Following the initial assessment, it was agreed that the complaint be referred for informal resolution. This informal resolution took the form of seeking support from the Monitoring Officer and receiving a Code of Conduct training refresher.

Year on Year Comparison of Complaints

Table 1 –The Number of District and Parish Council Complaints received 2018/19 – 2024/25

Table 1	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
District Councillors	1	9	12	20	16	6	6
Parish Councillors	20	5	21	12	6	6	3
Co-Optees	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	22	14	33	32	22	12	9

Table 2 - Action Taken on Complaints received 2018/19 to 2024/25

	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Withdrawn/not progressed	4	5	7	0	2	0	2
No Further Action	14	7	24	28	16	8	5
Other Action	2	2	2	1	2	3	2
Investigation	2	0	0	3	2	1	0
Outcome Awaited	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	22	14	33	32	22	12	9

5.26 In respect of the complaints processed during 2024/25, Table 2 shows that in the majority of cases no further action was taken on the complaints. Only two were referred for informal resolution that concluded the complaints.

Learning Points Arising from Complaints

5.27 The number of complaints has again reduced in the past year and none of the complaints resulted in the need for an investigation as has been the case in recent years.

5.28 The complaints received arose from different circumstances. Only a small number of complaints alleged a lack of respect from the subject member. However, it remains important to be mindful of the need to be respectful when communicating with others.

Register of Interests

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

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

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

Gifts and Hospitality

- 5.32 The Gifts and Hospitality Protocol is incorporated into the Members Code of Conduct and is set out in Appendix E to Part 13 of the Constitution (Codes and Protocols).
- 5.33 Officers are also subject to restrictions on those Gifts and Hospitality that are deemed to be acceptable under the Officers' Code of Conduct, which is set out in Part 13 of the Constitution. Like Members, Officers are required to declare gifts or hospitality received.
- 5.34 The intention of the rules governing Gifts and Hospitality is to ensure that the Council can demonstrate that no undue influence has been applied or could be said to have been applied by any service user, supplier or anyone else dealing with the Council and its stewardship of public funds. The rules therefore set out the obligations imposed on Members and Officers to declare relevant gifts and hospitality which have been offered to or received by them.
- 5.35 It should be noted that in addition to the risk that there could be a perception of impropriety, the acceptance of a gift or hospitality could amount to an offence under the Bribery Act 2010.
- 5.36 The Bribery Act 2010 creates a number of offences where a gift or other benefit is given or offered, which may amount to an offence of bribing another person, and/or of being bribed. Therefore, if Members or Officers are offered a 'gift' or other benefit by a third party, this could amount to an offence not just by the person offering the gift, but also by the Member or Officer concerned and by the Council. It is important to note that offences under this legislation can be committed by a person offering a gift or reward, even if the gift is not accepted.
- 5.37 In view of the above, it is very important that both Officers and Members understand the potentially serious implications of accepting gifts when it is not appropriate to do so.

There were 11 declarations of gifts or hospitality received by Members during the year 2024/25. This represents decrease on the previous year although it should be noted that declarations are frequently made of gifts or hospitality received that is below the value that requires that to be declared (i.e. £25). Members have been reminded of the need to declare any gifts or hospitality received in accordance with the Gifts and Hospitality Protocol. This information is published on the Council website.

- 5.38 There was also a decrease in the number of gifts and hospitality declared by officers with 47 declarations made during 2024/25, which is a considerable decrease from 73 declared in the previous year and more closely aligned with pre-Covid numbers. The

vast majority of gifts received were small token gifts with the total value of gifts declared being less than £1k, and the average value being £17.

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

Directorate	Number of Declarations	Number refused
CEO	0	0
People - Adults	36	2
People - Children	1	0
Place	8	0
Resources	2	1
TOTAL	47	3

5.40 In the last municipal year, the majority of gifts and hospitality declared was in the People-Adults Directorate.

Proposals

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

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

6 Other options considered

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

7 Conclusion

7.1 There have been a number of training sessions on the Code of Conduct over the 2024/25 municipal year, and these have been well attended, with Members very engaged with the sessions. This is a positive step by Members and should continue.

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

8 Appendices

None

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In: No.

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: Nicola Thomas
Job Title: Service Lead - Legal and Democratic
Tel No:
E-mail: Nicola.Thomas1@westberks.gov.uk

Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2024/25

Committee considering report:	Council
Date of Committee:	17 July 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver
Forward Plan Ref:	C4706

1 Purpose of the Report

The Annual Report provides a summary of the work of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board in 2024/25. It outlines progress made in working towards the strategic objectives of the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Berkshire West and implementation of the Delivery Plan for West Berkshire. It demonstrates how the Board has continued to assess the health needs of the local population. It also shows how the Board has sought to improve integration of Health and Social Care through the Better Care Fund.

2 Recommendation(s)

For Council to be informed of the Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report for 2024/25.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

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

	to Council and publish it on the website in order to raise the profile of the Health and Wellbeing Board locally.			
Risk Management:	Not applicable			
Property:	Not applicable			
Policy:	The report demonstrates that the Health and Wellbeing Board has been working in accordance with national guidance.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:	X			The report summarises the activities that the Health and Wellbeing Board has undertaken to improve the health and wellbeing of the citizens of West Berkshire
ICT Impact:		X		

Digital Services Impact:		X		
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Health and Wellbeing Board activities relate to Priority 2a: 'Prioritise Support for those who need it most'
Core Business:		X		
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	Public Health Team BOB ICB			

4 Supporting Information

Background

- 4.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2024/25 provides a summary of how the Board has worked together to:
- deliver the aims and objectives set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
 - implement the actions set out in the Strategy's Delivery Plan;
 - identify and respond to the changing health needs of the local population and the services designed to address them; and
 - promote better integration of health and social care services.
- 4.2 The report highlights some of the key achievements of the Board and its partners over the last year, as well as looking ahead to priorities for the coming year for each of the five priorities in the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Items of particular interest are described in more detailed case studies. Detail is also provided on the LGA review of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the associated workshop.
- 4.3 The Cost of Living Crisis and Housing have been key areas of focus for the Board over the last year and there is a summary of how the Board and its partners have worked together to respond to these challenges.
- 4.4 In addition to looking back at the previous year, the annual report also touches on some of its priorities for the year ahead.

Proposals

- 4.5 For Council to be informed of the Health and Wellbeing Board's Annual Report for 2024/25.

5 Other options considered

None – the report is to for information only.

6 Conclusion

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

7 Appendices

Appendix A – Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2024/25.

Background Papers:

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

[Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 2030 Dec 20211.pdf \(westberks.gov.uk\)](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/12345/Berkshire-West-Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-2021-2030-Dec-20211.pdf)

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

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is for information only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

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



Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report

(May 2025)



Foreword



We are pleased to present this, our second Annual Report of the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

The report provides a summary of the progress we have made against each of the five core priorities of the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy:

- Priority One: Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- Priority Two: Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- Priority Three: Help families and children in early years
- Priority Four: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children
- Priority Five: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The report also sets out how we have responded to challenges that have emerged since the Strategy was published, such as the ongoing cost of living crisis, and the increasing prevalence of housing related issues, which are having tangible impacts on the physical health and mental wellbeing of our residents.

The Health and Wellbeing Board has developed and continues to develop, strong cross-sector partnerships. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the various sub-groups of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the wider partnerships.

Looking ahead, we will seek to act on the learnings from the recent Local Government Association review of the Health and Wellbeing Board. In particular, we will look to optimise our governance model, and to improve our focus and effectiveness in driving improvements to the health and wellbeing of the local population.

We recognise that there will be challenges in making these reforms, particularly as we enter a period of significant uncertainty associated with changes taking place at national, regional and local levels. These include the abolition of NHS England, changes to the role of and funding for Integrated Care Boards, the creation of strategic authorities, and reorganisation of local government. However, we feel that we have partners with the requisite vision, skills and determination to make this succeed.



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



Dr Ben Riley
BOB ICB Chief Medical
Officer
(Vice Chairman)

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Further information about the Health and Wellbeing Board can be found on the West Berkshire Council website:

[Health and Wellbeing Board - West Berkshire Council](#)



Strategic priorities

Health and Wellbeing Boards bring together local leaders from the health, public health, and social care systems, along with those from key local partners involved in delivering shared work to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.

Each Health and Wellbeing Board has a statutory duty to produce a Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which commits to improving health and wellbeing by setting out priorities for where members of the Board will work together in planning and delivering local services.

The Health and Wellbeing Boards for Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham have developed a [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) in conjunction with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership, with the aim of securing improvements in population health across the three local authorities, which together comprise the Berkshire West 'Place'. The Strategy is focused on five priorities.

Strategic Priorities

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

Although the strategy applies across the three local authorities, each has adopted its own delivery plan incorporating a unique set of actions that reflect the particular needs of its residents and the priorities of local partners. These can be updated independently in response to changing circumstances while still allowing for joint working.

BERKSHIRE WEST HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY (HWBS)

2021- 2030





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



Objectives

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

Progress on Actions

Health in All Policies (HiAP) - The process for reviewing new council policies and their impact on health and emotional wellbeing, with a focus on reducing health inequalities, is being refined and strengthened as part of the broader implementation of the HiAP approach.

Health Impact Policy (HIP) – Work has progressed on development and implementation of a HIP to ensure that planning decisions support healthier environments by embedding health considerations into development proposals and land use strategies. It is hoped that the Policy will be adopted later this year.

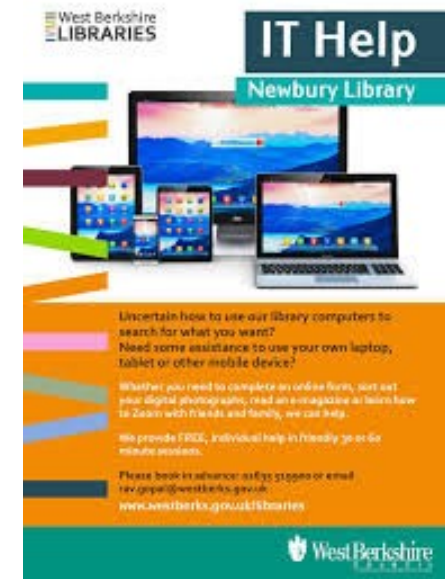
Supported internships – These are being used to help young people aged 16-24 with an Education Health and Care Plan transition into employment. Newbury College supported four students were supported with work placements in 2024/25, with a three more students given work experience pending discussions about how they could be supported to complete supported internships. For next year, 10 students have been identified for the Pre-Supported Internship programme and eight for Supported Internships.

Support for Schools – The Department of Work and Pensions' Support for Schools Advisers offered free employability, information and advice sessions to students aged 12-18 (up to 24 for SEND students). Their support assists students with their transition from school/college into the world of work and further education.

Tackling Digital Exclusion – This has been identified as a key issue for some residents. It can lead people to feeling isolated, as well as representing a significant barrier to accessing services.

West Berkshire's libraries have played a key role in helping people to get online, with residents now able to book 30 or 60 minute IT help sessions.

Also, a partnership between the NHS and local libraries has helped more people to access online health services by teaching them how to use the NHS app. This has allowed patients to better understand and manage their health and to access services more easily.





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

Case Study: Community Wellness Outreach Service

Solutions4Health have been commissioned to deliver a targeted Community Wellness Outreach Service in West Berkshire over an 18 month period from January 2024.

Eligible residents are contacted by their GP to inform them that they would be invited for a free NHS Health Check. Although the main focus of the service is detection of patients with cardiovascular disease (CVD), it provides patients with a check-up of their overall health and an indication of whether they are at higher risk of getting a range of different conditions including:

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Stroke

During the check discussions take place with the patient about how to reduce their risk of these conditions, and if they are over 65, they are also told about symptoms of dementia to look out for.

The check includes:

- Height and weight measurements
- Waist measurement
- Blood pressure check
- Cholesterol testing
- Blood sugar testing

Specialist staff from Solutions4Health talk to patients about their mental health and any issues affecting their wellbeing. They are also able to support patients take key actions, including stopping smoking, losing weight, eating healthier and getting more exercise.

After the health check, the results are recorded and, with the patient's consent, shared with their GP to update their health record. If patients aren't registered with a GP, the team can help patients to do that.

Mobile clinics are provided across the district, and patients can just drop-in for a health check or pre-book a slot.

The service has been successful in delivering its objectives. As of 5 February 2025:

- 2,181 full health checks completed (of a target of 2,500), of which 1,576 were with people in priority groups.
- 131 'mini' health checks completed.
- 412 clinics held across 35 locations.
- 65 people supported to register with a GP.
- 455 referrals made to health behaviour change support.
- 51 CVD prevention community engagement sessions held, working with 20 VCSE organisations – 1,203 people attended.

Evaluation of the project will take place from the first quarter of 2025/26.



Client case study:

When did you have your NHS Health Check?

Council offices 9/10/2024

How did you find out about the service?

I was phoned

How has the service helped you?

It has highlighted to me that I need to be more active and how I need to make changes

What changes have you made to stay healthy? Please provide details

I want to start walking and help my family be more active

How have these changes helped you improve your health and well-being?

I think my mental health will improve

Any other comments

I have always had problems with my weight, and I have found really it hard to do anything about my weight since reaching menopause. I have shared my thoughts with the GP. They took bloods from me. I have not been offered any support, advice or help. I hope that my raised cholesterol levels will get the GP's attention and help me find another path for my weight loss journey.

Thank you so much for helping me today and for giving me information on the menopause café



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



Objectives

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

Progress on Actions

Dementia Cafés – Two dementia cafés have been successfully opened at Hungerford and Theale, targeting residents with a dementia diagnosis. The cafés provide a range of dementia focused sessions as well as other activities designed to mentally stimulate those with dementia and encourage conversation with others. Both cafés are well attended.

Carers Strategy – A draft Strategy has been developed, which explains how West Berkshire Council, the Integrated Care Board and partner organisations will work together to identify carers and help them to balance their caring responsibilities with a life outside of caring. The Strategy was developed in conjunction with carers and young carers, and takes account of feedback obtained through the Personal Social Services Survey for Adult Carers in England. The Strategy is due to be adopted in May 2025.

Support for Carers and Young Carers - West Berkshire is part of a joint project with four other local authorities to focus on developing resources and campaigns to help identify new carers. This project is funded through the Accelerating Reform Grant.

The Carers Partnership signposts carers for health checks/other services appropriate to their emotional, physical or mental health needs. A Social Care Practitioner has also been appointed to focus mainly on completing and monitoring carers assessments and signposting

carers to appropriate help at a much earlier stage.

A self-assessment tool for carers has been developed and is in the testing phase.

Work is ongoing with Calcot and Thatcham Family Hubs to develop regional clubs for young carers, with the aim of reaching families who live in more rural areas of West Berkshire.

A weekly youth group has been established for secondary school age carers where carers are offered a hot meal and various activities.

Domestic Abuse Strategy – The Domestic Abuse Strategy (incorporating the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy) was adopted in September 2024. The Strategy sets out how statutory requirements are to be met by ensuring that support in safe accommodation is commissioned to meet the needs of victims and their children.

A local needs assessment was carried out to inform the Strategy, which involved gathering data from internal and external providers, as well as victim engagement and interviews. The draft Strategy was then the subject of public consultation between April and May 2024.

A draft delivery plan has also been produced which sets out how the Domestic Abuse Board (a Sub-Body of the HWB) will work with stakeholders to deliver activities that address identified gaps and support the Strategy's objectives.



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

Case Study: Housing and Health

The correlation between poor housing and health inequalities is stark. Along with poverty, lifestyle and poor nutrition, these make up the main drivers of health inequalities and variances in life expectancy. It represents a crucial factor that shapes wellbeing, economic stability, and overall quality of life.

Local authorities and their partners play a significant role in seeking to improve standards and to mitigate risk, including:

- Planning policies, systems and allocations that deliver social housing.
- Building control, ensuring the safety and standards of new housing.
- Statutory housing service dealing with rough sleeping, and providing a safety net and long-term housing solutions
- Public protection service, managing rental housing standards and regulating landlords.

The Board received a report in December 2024, which provided a summary of a local housing stock condition survey and the local response to the survey's findings.

The survey found that the standard of the housing stock in West Berkshire was very good. However, the report estimated that: 6,500 (11%) of properties have Category 1 Hazards that present an immediate risk to occupants, with the highest concentration of in rural areas.

Cold, damp and mould are issues in some properties as seen by the Public Protection Service on a regular basis. However, Officers believe these issues to be significantly under-reported along with other hazards (based on the stock condition survey and other evidence from the voluntary sector). It is thought that people may be reluctant to report issues because of potential impacts on relationships with landlords.

A significant number of local properties are of an age where energy efficiency is low and other standards are also not in keeping with modern requirements. There are also a number of poorly converted properties that have inherent problems.

House prices and rents are very high. The median price to median earnings ratio is just short of ten. Good rental properties are in short supply and rents and mortgages have been rising in line with rising interest rates. Some landlords have indicated that maintenance costs and mortgage rates have risen so steeply that repairs are becoming unaffordable without significantly higher rents.

The impact of the Renters Reform Bill is not yet known. The abolition of the Section 21 no fault evictions could lead to a flurry of evictions ahead of enactment as landlords seek to exit the market or evict tenants they see as problematic. New rules on energy performance restricting new lets to A-C ratings may be desirable, but this may have unforeseen consequences. The

combination of measures may also see rents rising in a diminishing market.

The future of energy security is linked intrinsically to world events as seen in 2021-23 where prices rose exponentially. Although they have fallen back significantly, the price cap has outstripped inflation. The means testing of the winter fuel allowance will significantly affect those at the margins with many living in older less energy efficient properties.

Finally, there is the cost of emergency and temporary accommodation which is a challenge for all councils in the region. Demand is high but so are costs and this will continue to present operational and financial pressures for the foreseeable future.

In response to the report, the Board resolved to:

- Appoint the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing as a permanent Board Member.
- Establish a working group to develop an action plan to respond to the issues highlighted in the housing stock condition survey.
- Receive an update on the likely impacts of the Renters Reform Bill.

The Board will continue to keep a watching brief on housing related issues and the impact of changes arising from the emerging legislation as it is enacted.



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



Objectives

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

Early Response
Hub



Progress on Actions

CAAS & ERH – The Contact Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS) and Early Response Hub (ERH) have continued to develop their offer, providing the right support at the right time from the right people.

A practice framework has been developed that enhances the local offer and provides a way of working that ensures that children and families are enabled to bring their own solutions and supported to do so. The success of this model of working is significant. The data clearly shows a reduction in children being progressed for longer term statutory intervention. Most new 'Child in Need' referrals now work with the CASS and ERH.

The Family Help and Achievement Practice Model has been enhanced and practices embedded, and its success is tangible. Family First Assessments are being utilised widely across CAAS and ERH, and the 'spectrum of need' developed as part of the model enables and facilitates movement across the threshold.

1001 Days Platform - There was a soft launch for the digital platform in December 2023. Parents' feedback was collected during the development stage, but it has been tested further as a live resource. The webpage was launched to Health visitors and midwifery colleague earlier this year and since then stickers with a QR code have been printed and given to community midwives and health visitors

for use in the Red Books. The webpage continues to be promoted via antenatal and postnatal courses and on Facebook.

Reducing Parental Conflict Training – The government developed the RPC programme to reduce parental conflict and improve children's outcomes. It delivers training to professionals, and a full day workshop to parents to help them co-parent more effectively and reduce conflict. The programme is being funded for a further year into 2025/26 and an application will be submitted to support continuation of the programme in West Berkshire.

Family Hubs – Work has been ongoing to develop and expand the Family Hub offer, ensuring more children, parents, and carers can access the support they need, when they need it. Starting in April, changes will ensure a more seamless and joined-up support system. The Family Hubs will work more closely with our Early Help teams, strengthening the support available, not just for families with young children, but also for those with older children and young people aged up to 19 years.





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



Early Years System Workshop

The Health and Wellbeing Board identified concerns around school readiness and the attainment gap between pupils on free school meals and other pupils.

These issues need to be considered using a systems approach, since school readiness is not an isolated issue—it is often influenced by broader, underlying factors that affect many aspects of a child's health and wellbeing.

A workshop was held on 16 January, attended by elected members, and representatives from Public Health, Children & Family Service, Education Service, Culture & Libraries Service, health, and the voluntary sector.

The aim was to explore how to collaborate more effectively to reduce demand and, ultimately, improve all health and wellbeing outcomes for children. The workshop aimed to do this by developing a stronger strategic foundation for systems working and thinking across relevant services.

A trauma informed approach was proposed. Many traumas originate in early childhood and are often the result of children's essential needs not being met.

The workshop was the starting point for discussing how the system can adopt an approach that supports parents and caregivers in meeting their children's essential needs. It proposed that the approach should span the

entire system, from primary prevention services like midwifery and health visiting to early help services through family hubs, children's services, and the voluntary sector.

In order to establish an approach to systems working that tackles root causes and wider determinants, it is essential to understand each of the services within the system in terms of their purpose and the challenges they face.

Feedback from the workshop can be broadly categorised into two main themes:

1. The importance of prevention:

- Preventing issues from arising unnecessarily and reducing reliance on statutory intervention, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children.
- Supporting mental health and wellbeing.
- Addressing the attainment gap
- Embedding the understanding that prevention and early help is everyone's responsibility, requiring a cultural shift.

2. A collaborative approach:

- Partnerships based on a common strategy and vision.
- Ensuring commitment from all partners to complete early help assessments and develop plans, reinforcing that this is not solely the responsibility of Children's Services.
- Developing a clearer, more focused Early Help strategy and structure, distinct

from rebranding existing Children's Services.

- Creating mutually beneficial arrangements by actively listening to partners' needs in these collaborations.
- Gaining a better understanding of the skills within the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Provide upskilling opportunities for smaller voluntary sector organisations.

Next Steps

The following next steps have been agreed:

- Examine the current prevention and early help structure and identify opportunities to strengthen it.
- Develop a plan for engagement with key partners to develop a comprehensive prevention and early help partnership strategy and shared vision.
- Take a joined-up systems approach to ensure appropriate collaboration, alignment, and communication across the interconnected pieces of work currently underway, including:
 - The Health Scrutiny Children's Mental Health Task and Finish Group.
 - Recommissioning of the 0-19 Public Health Nursing contract.
 - Director of Public Health's annual report.
 - Aligning Family Hubs with the evidence-based Family Hub model, supporting the "Best Start in Life" vision.



Progress on priority four: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children



Objectives

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

Progress on Actions

Health and Wellbeing in Schools Programme:

The Health and Wellbeing in Schools Award offers a practical 'plan do and review' approach to improving health and wellbeing in children, young people and staff. One school achieved the Award in the 2024/25 academic year.

The Public Health Team delivers healthy lifestyles workshops for Year 3 pupils. All primary schools are eligible for the Food and You workshop, with the additional Be Active, Sleep and Wellbeing workshop available to selected schools, based on data received from the National Child Measurement Programme. 30 schools received workshops in 2024/25.

The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) provides a Young Health Champion qualification for young people to enable them to learn new practical skills and knowledge for promoting health and wellbeing to peers, friends, family and their wider communities. 30 Young Health Champions were trained in West Berkshire in 2024/25.

Substance Behaviour Transitions Worker:

A transitions worker started in post in September 2024 within the Children and Young People Substance Misuse Service.



Progress on priority five: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults



Objectives

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

Progress on Actions

Suicide Prevention – The Suicide Prevention Outreach Service was commissioned by the Public Health Team in 2024 and is being delivered via the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire. The aim of this service is to engage with a range of organisations to provide information and resources about suicide prevention and deliver training. The suicide prevention outreach worker has continued to provide accredited half-day suicide prevention first aid courses to front line workers, managers, HR staff and the voluntary sector, as well as day-long accredited suicide prevention courses for adults working with young people.

Samaritans' signage has been erected at locations such as bridges, car parks, and waterside areas in West Berkshire to encourage people who are contemplating suicide to seek support.

Recent suspected suicides at and around Thatcham Railway station prompted the Chair of the Suicide Prevention Action Group (SPAG) to contact rail industry representatives to ask what resources were available for railway employees to look out for and offer support to people who may be considering taking their own life on the railway. The Chair has sought the support of the Health and Wellbeing Board in encouraging the rail industry to explore preventative measures, including both physical barriers and technology solutions.

Bereavement Support – The Mental Health Action Group (MHAG) held a bereavement support workshop in July, which brought together a range of local statutory and voluntary sector organisations. The aim of this workshop was to consider whose mental health would be at risk of being adversely impacted by a bereavement and what support is in place for them. A webpage was also produced, highlighting resources to signpost people to sources of help and support that are available following a bereavement. This was promoted during Grief Awareness Week 2024: [Bereavement and Grief - West Berkshire Council](#)

Mental Health Forum – MHAG has worked in partnership with service users and local organisations to run a 'co-produced' West Berkshire Mental Health Forum. This brings together service users, voluntary sector and public sector partners to learn from people with lived experience of mental health challenges and share knowledge and information to help improve local services and initiatives.

The first meeting was held on 14 October 2024, with post-meeting evaluation finding 100% of people felt it was 'good' (74%) or 'great' (26%). The Forum continues to meet monthly and is providing valuable feedback on service users' experiences and concerns.



Progress on priority five: Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

Case Study: Let's Get Mindful Fund

Greenham Trust has partnered with West Berkshire Council to launch a new £90,000 fund to support voluntary and community sector organisations working to enhance mental health and wellbeing across the district.

The aim of the Let's Get Mindful Fund is to enable local, not-for-profit organisations to carry out meaningful and impactful projects that support people with mental health challenges. It also ensures that organisations have access to financial resources to expand their work, offer additional support, make one-off purchases, purchase equipment, or launch new initiatives.

The fund provides grants from £500 upwards and is targeted at smaller organisations.

It will seek to deliver the following objectives:

- Prevent poor mental health and cultivate good mental wellbeing to give people more choices and control over their care
- Support children, young people and their families impacted by mental health and wellbeing issues and enable their access to services.
- Narrow inequalities in mental health and wellbeing
- Support community-based activities including peer support, and community support groups.

- Support vulnerable, and socially isolated residents, including older people.

In assessing grant applications, priority will be given to areas considered most in need, and to projects that support people who are considered vulnerable and/or isolated. Funding will be allocated on a rolling basis as applications are approved. Some examples are described below.

Recovery in Mind: Recovery in Mind CIC provides a Recovery College for the local community. They work with people whose mental health challenges affect many areas of their lives. By providing creativity opportunities, they can move forward in their recovery and lead better lives, whatever that means to them.

Recovery in Mind was awarded £6,200, which will be used to develop the creativity programme by offering more courses in areas such as; the written word, craft, group reading, mindful sewing, woodwork, art and nature-based activities. The current offer makes a real difference to the mental wellbeing of all the students that attend the Recovery College.

Students are from all age groups and benefits of attending workshops include: improved concentration, skill acquisition, improved self-esteem, developing a new interest or hobby, working collaboratively, and a sense of accomplishment leading to personal growth. The grant will fund venue hire, specialist tutors and peer trainer support, creativity equipment and supplies.

Eight Bells for Mental Health: Eight Bells for Mental Health is a member-led charity that supports residents of West Berkshire affected by mental health issues, loneliness and social isolation by running drop-in sessions throughout the week. They have over 100 members registered and on average, 70 attend the session each week.

In 2024 they provided 41 free art sessions for their members, as well as 80 hours of counselling and 450 subsidised lunches.

They were awarded a grant of £14,400 which will be used to support some of the charity's running costs, and will allow recruitment of additional volunteers to support the drop-in sessions and provide support.

As a member-led charity, members play an active role in shaping their services through their own management committee and member trustees. They also plan day trips, activities and fundraising events which contributes to their mental health recovery.

Eight Bells provides a lifeline to people experiencing mental ill health, many of whom face complex challenges such as social isolation, unemployment, financial hardship and stigma. The funding will allow them to continue a variety of activities connected to the five ways to wellbeing such as art therapy, yoga, exercise, cooking and gardening. This will help their members to maintain/improve their wellbeing, develop new skills and regain confidence.



Joint Strategic Needs Assessment



About the JSNA

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 introduced duties and powers for health and wellbeing boards in relation to Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs). Local authorities and integrated care boards (ICBs) have equal and joint duties to prepare JSNAs and JHWSs, through the health and wellbeing board.

The purpose of JSNAs and JHWSs is to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community and reduce inequalities. They require a continuous process of strategic assessment and planning.

JSNAs are produced on particular topics. The outputs, in the form of evidence and analysis of needs, and agreed priorities are used to help to determine what actions local authorities, the local NHS and other partners need to take to meet health and social care needs, and to address the wider determinants that impact on health and wellbeing.

The JSNA can be found on the Berkshire Observatory website: [Berkshire Observatory – West Berkshire – About and frequently asked questions](#)

Healthy Weight Needs Assessment

The Healthy Weight Needs Assessment was last updated in 2020.

Excess weight represents a major barrier to good health and wellbeing and significantly

contributes to high risk of preventable diseases and early mortality. Excess weight has further negative impact on the mental health, lower education attainment in children, and frequent absence from work amongst others. Beyond individual health impacts, there are broader social and economic consequences, which further increases the burden on an already stretched health and social care services.

The Healthy Weight Needs Assessment focuses on both preventing and addressing excess weight in West Berkshire, ensuring that local strategies support healthier lifestyles and reduce inequalities in access to good nutrition and physical activity. It has been informed by a variety of data sets, including the results of a local survey carried out in 2023.

The development of the Healthy Weight Needs Assessment has been an ongoing process; however, progress was significantly delayed due to changes in personnel within the Public Health and Wellbeing team. With the appointment of a Senior Programme Officer and support from the Consultant in Public Health, work on the assessment has now resumed, ensuring its completion aligns with current priorities strategic objectives. Also, the recommendations provided in this document are being reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose and should bring about a reduction of excess weight within the council.

The needs assessment is being developed with a whole system approach, which recognises that

behaviours are influenced by a complex interplay of factors that has links with health inequalities and wider determinants of health. This document being developed will show how our approach moves beyond isolated interventions and instead fosters collaboration across multiple sectors, ensuring that healthy weight is embedded into wider policies, services, and community initiatives.

Approach to Updating the JSNA

The review and update of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for West Berkshire will follow a structured, collaborative, and data-driven approach. Led jointly by the Public Health teams at West Berkshire Council and Reading Borough Council. The process is supported by a dedicated working group and overseen by a steering group comprising of local authority and health system partners. The process will ensure the JSNA remains relevant, reflective of current needs, and responsive to local priorities.

The methodology will include a review of best practices and extensive stakeholder engagement. The approach is grounded in co-production and continuous engagement, aligning with Integrated Care System (ICS) priorities and Health and Wellbeing Board strategies. In parallel to the JSNA review, a rapid “State of the District” JSNA report will be produced to support strategic commissioning, inform service planning and ensure alignment with Integrated Care System objectives and the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Boards.



Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment



Each Health and Wellbeing Board has a statutory duty to publish and keep up to date a statement of needs for pharmaceutical services for their population. This is called the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA). The purpose of the PNA is to:

- inform local plans for the commissioning of specific and specialised pharmaceutical services
- to support the decision-making process for applications for new pharmacies or changes of pharmacy premises undertaken by NHS England

The PNA assesses whether the current provision of pharmacies and the commissioned services they provide meet the needs of West Berkshire's residents and whether there are any existing gaps, or future gaps that are likely to occur within the three-year lifetime of this document, taking account of factors such as new development.

It assesses current and future provision with respect to:

- Essential Services, i.e., current accessibility of pharmacies and their provision of Essential Services
- Advanced Services
- Other services (which may be commissioned at the local or national level).

The current PNA was adopted in September 2022 and expires in September 2025. Since this was developed, there have been a number of

significant changes to the community pharmacy landscape at both the national and local levels.

Nationally, some of the big chains, such as Boots, Lloyds and Superdrug have closed or sold many or all of their branches, including several in West Berkshire. In many cases the large chains have been replaced by independent community pharmacies, and often these have been found to be work more closely with local GP surgeries and offer additional services to patients, such as home delivery.

As such, only one Supplementary Statement has been issued during the lifetime of the current PNA to reflect the significant gap in provision that was created following closure of the pharmacy at the Sainsbury Supermarket in Calcot.

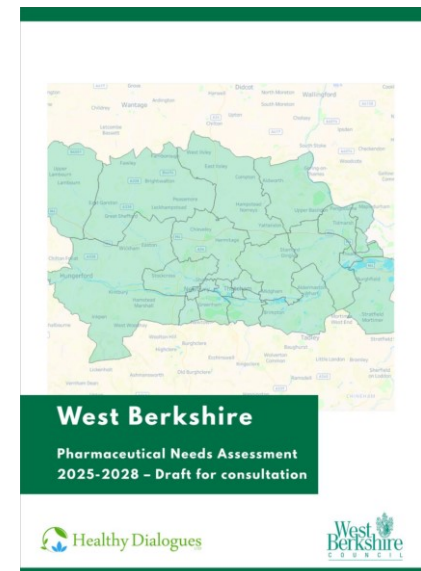
There have been several recent applications for new pharmacies wishing to open in West Berkshire, of which two have been approved. These are deemed to offer unforeseen benefits (i.e. they do not respond to an identified gap in provision set out in the PNA).

The role of pharmacies has also been boosted following the introduction of the Pharmacy First Scheme, which enables patients to be referred into community pharmacy for a minor illness or an urgent repeat medicine supply.

Work on the next PNA is currently underway. The process is prescribed in the national guidance and includes:

- a review of the current and future demographics and health needs of West Berkshire population
- a survey of West Berkshire patients and the public on their use and expectations of pharmacy services, which took place between 13 December 2024 and 16 February 2025.
- an assessment of the commissioned essential, advanced, and other commissioned pharmacy services provided in West Berkshire
- a 60-day PNA consultation with statutory stakeholders.

The intention is to adopt the updated PNA at the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 24 September 2024.





Better Care Fund



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

The Policy Framework requires systems to have a jointly agreed plan across Health and Social Care which demonstrates how people are supported to stay well, safe, and independent at home for longer, and how the right care is provided at the right time and in the right place. The plan is refreshed annually.

The Board is required to report quarterly on the performance against four national metrics:

- 1) Avoidable admissions - indirectly standardised rate per 100,000 population
- 2) Falls – Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over directly age standardised rate per 100,000. (This metric is new for 2023-25)
- 3) Discharge to usual place of residence – percentage of people, resident in HWB, who are discharged from acute hospital to their normal place of resident.
- 4) Residential Admissions – long-term support needs of older people (age 65 and over) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population.

Previously, there was a requirement to report on the reablement metric, but this has been removed for 2024/25.

We are currently on track to meet three out of the four BCF metrics. We are not on track to meet unplanned avoidable admissions to hospital.

As a system, Berkshire West has invested and prioritised several programmes of work in 2024/25 to maximise impact and system

resilience all year round. One of these programmes is same day urgent access – a GP is co-located on the acute site to triage directly from the Emergency Department. Early data indicates that 30-40 patients are being diverted daily. The NHS has seen a huge increase in cases of Flu over the 2024/25 winter season.

	Priority	Update
1	Targeted Community NHS Health Check Outreach Programme	The Community Wellness Outreach Service (CWOS) has successfully delivered NHS Health Checks, held CVD engagement sessions and helped people with lifestyle behaviour changes.
2	JOY platform	Social prescribers across West Berkshire have been using JOY successfully. JOY supports daily client related activity such as case notes and referrals, and links health and social care professionals to community services.
3	Infection Control Service	Direct support into our Care Homes by BOB ICS nurses. Critical support over the winter period with avoiding hospital admissions.
4	Be Well this Winter	Provision of targeted Information and guidance to residents, focusing on falls, self-care, vaccinations and staying warm.
5	Reducing Inequalities	Work supporting PCNs to improve uptake of health checks for people with learning difficulties and severe mental illnesses. Reducing inequalities is a focus across all our work, but this specific work is completed.
6	Workforce	Continues to be a priority for 2025/26. Working on recruitment and retention of social workers and occupational therapists.
7	Falls Pathway	Continues to be a priority for 2025/26. Investment was made into our Falls Coordinators to strengthen the workforce and provision of service.
8	Self-Care Programmes	Continues to be a priority for 2025/26. Focusing on reducing non-elective admissions.
9	Trust Intelligence Notification Assistance (TINA)	Continues to be a priority for 2025/26. Implementation of a system to speed up hospital discharge and reduce meetings held.
10	Reduce the number of people coming out of hospital on pathway 3	Continues to be a priority for 2025/26. Reviewing our decision making and impact on capacity in the care market.
11	Deep dive into data	Specifically relating to avoidable admissions and discharge to normal place of residence.



Cost of living update



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

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

Inflation rates have dropped significantly from the peak levels seen after the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict - the latest Consumer Prices Index (CPI) update shows that prices rose by 2.8% in the 12 months to February 2025. However, prices remain significantly higher than they were 5 years ago, and a significant number of residents are still experiencing financial hardship.

The impacts of price rises have been felt disproportionately by certain groups including the disabled, unemployed people, shift workers, those working in lower paid jobs and residents living in rural areas.

Retail prices are predicted to rise significantly as a result of the increase in employer national insurance contributions and the National Living Wage which are due to come into effect in April 2025. Also, from 1 April, the energy price cap will be increasing to £1,849, up 6.4% from £1,738.

Action has been taken place at the local level to support residents. A comprehensive website

offer has been developed, signposting to local and national sources of help and assistance ([Cost of Living - West Berkshire Council](#)). This forms part of a wider communications strategy.

Key stakeholders from the Council and voluntary sector partners meet on a regular basis to share intelligence about the levels and nature of support required from residents and to coordinate activity.

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

The 2024/25 grant was allocated to the following:

- Assistance for food and energy
- Essential household goods scheme
- Support for those in emergency accommodation
- Discretionary assistance fund
- School holiday meal provision
- Targeted support for pensioners
- Support for young carers and those leaving care
- Main fund for individual and family applications

The grant for 2025/26 will be allocated along similar lines.

Voluntary organisations and charities assisting those struggling financially are reporting significant increases in demand for support and advice.

Demand for support shows no signs of abating and there are a number of external factors that are likely to further exacerbate the situation.

For example, the rise in energy costs combined with sustained periods of cold weather and withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance may lead to increase indebtedness.

Also, the Implications of the Renters Rights Bill on the rental market are not yet known, but it is anticipated that there may be an increase in evictions prior to implementation. Similarly, new rules on energy performance of rental properties may drive up rents.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will continue to receive updates and facilitate joint working between partners where there are opportunities to add value.





The Health and Wellbeing Board identified the need to undertake a review of its governance arrangements and working practices in order to increase its overall effectiveness in improving the health and wellbeing of the local population and reducing health inequalities.

The Local Government Association (LGA) was requested to carry out the review. In developing the brief, the Board identified a number of core strengths on which future improvements could build, as well as the drivers for change that had prompted the review.

Interviews with Board Members took place between December 2024 and February 2025. These were used by the LGA to inform their assessment.

A workshop was organised for 3 April 2025 where the LGA's reflections were fed back to members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the HWB Steering Group.

The following themes were identified by the LGA for further exploration:

- Leadership and accountability
- Clarity of purpose in improving population health and reducing inequalities
- The need to focus on a small number of shared and agreed priorities that are above and beyond 'business as usual' activities
- How the HWB is making a difference
- Culture of the HWB – moving towards a 'strategic partnership of place'
- Governance arrangements

- Capacity and resourcing
- Making the geography work
- Clarity about the distinctive role of the HWB
- Partnership working

Those present at the workshop were invited to reflect on the LGA's feedback and to answer the following questions:

- What will help us to achieve what good looks like and work effectively as a HWB?
- What is my role in contributing to the HWBs' success?
- What are my expectations of other Board members?
- What mechanisms can we put in place to continuously improve the way we work for maximum impact?
- What ways of working do we need to put in place?
- What enablers would support me to contribute effectively as a HWB member (considering tools, resources, structures and development opportunities)?

A summary of key points discussed is provided below:

- There was broad agreement that the HWB needed to be more of a strategic partnership.
- There was a desire to move away from formal meetings and have more informal meetings/hot focus sessions, with a focus on a different theme each quarter.

- It was recognised that the HWB should be driven by data, informed by the JSNA/Healthwatch/Health Scrutiny.
- The HWB should be more about creative problem solving and less about policing performance.
- Reports should be about decision making rather than presenting information to note.
- The HWB needed to be able to demonstrate tangible impact
- There should be a clear focus on a small number of priorities at any given time rather than trying to do everything at once – this would require the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan to be updated.
- All members must be involved in actively driving the HWB's agenda and developing a 12 month forward plan.
- The role of the HWB Steering Group needs to be clarified.
- The sub-groups should be audited and rationalised – these should have clear links to the HWB's priorities.
- The HWB needed to develop stronger relationships with its sub-groups.

A task and finish group has been established to map out the next steps, responding to the above points. A report will be brought to a future meeting for consideration.



Looking ahead to 2025/26 (and beyond)



National Context

As part of a significant shake-up of health services, the government has recently announced that it plans to abolish NHS England, with its functions to be integrated within the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) over a two year period.

Initial indications suggest that the government is seeking to reduce the combined size of the two bodies by about 50%. The aim is to cut bureaucracy and accelerate healthcare delivery.

This controversial move also grants more autonomy to Integrated Care Boards regarding use of their funding. However, they are themselves having to take strong action to balance their books, including a 50% cut in ICB management budgets and working with NHS Trusts/Foundation Trusts to reduce their corporate services budgets to pre-pandemic levels.

The impacts of these changes are not yet fully understood. Decisions will need to be taken as to which functions that are currently undertaken by NHS England will be moved to the DHSC, to ICBs or regions, and which functions will no longer be delivered.



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Changes are also taking place at the local and sub-regional levels. The government has announced its intention to create Strategic Authorities with devolved powers to enable more local decision-making. The default assumption is for them to have a combined population of 1.5 million or above. The long-term aim is for public service boundaries – including those of police, probation, fire and health services – and those of Strategic Authorities, to align.

The government has also indicated that it expects all two tier areas and smaller unitary authorities to develop proposals for reorganisation into new local authorities with populations of around 500,000 or more. Government believes this will help to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and better withstand financial shocks. West Berkshire is in discussions with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, and the other five Berkshire unitary authorities, to explore options.

The above will clearly have implications for the geographical footprint over which local HWBs and ICBs will operate.

Local government reorganisation proposals are due to be submitted by November 2025 and it is expected that the new unitary authorities will take over from existing councils by April 2028. Timescales for the creation of the Strategic Authorities have yet to be confirmed.

Local Priorities

Regardless of the wider changes taking place at the national, sub-regional and local levels, there is still a need for the HWB to continue to drive improvements to population health for residents of West Berkshire and to continue to build a sound base on which any new arrangements can build.

Key activities for the coming year will include:

- Mapping out the next steps towards addressing issues identified through the LGA review.
- Developing the new Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, ready for adoption by the end of September 2025.
- Refreshing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the HWB's future workstreams.
- Updating the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan, with a focus on a handful of core priorities over and above 'business as usual' activities.
- Create a HWB dashboard to show how the area performs against key health metrics – this will be used to help measure the HWB's impacts.



Health and Wellbeing Board partners



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust



**Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire
and Berkshire West**
Integrated Care Board



Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



**Public Protection
Partnership** | Bracknell Forest
West Berkshire



healthwatch
West Berkshire



Glossary



- BCF** – Better Care Fund
- BOB** – Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West
- CAAS** – Contact Advice and Assessment Service
- CPI** – Consumer Price Index
- CVD** – Cardiovascular disease
- CWOS** – Community Wellness Outreach Service
- DHSC** – Department of Health and Social Care
- EAH** – Early Assessment Hub
- HWB** – Health and Wellbeing Board
- HiAP** – Health in All Policies
- HIP** – Health Impact Policy
- HWB** – Health and Wellbeing Board
- ICB** – Integrated Care Board
- JHWS** – Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- JSNA** – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- LGA** – Local Government Association
- MHAG** – Mental Health Action Group
- PCN** – Primary Care Network
- PNA** – Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment
- RPC** – Reducing Parental Conflict
- RSPH** – Royal Society for Public Health
- SEND** – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- SPAG** – Suicide Prevention Action Group
- WBC** – West Berkshire Council

Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/25

Committee considering report:	Council
Date of Committee:	17 July 2025
Scrutiny Commission Chairman:	Councillor Carolyn Culver
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver

1 Purpose of the Report

The Annual Scrutiny report for 2024/25 provides a summary of the work of the Scrutiny Commission, and Health Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2 Recommendation(s)

For Council to be informed of the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2024/25.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

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

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

Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The report demonstrates that the Council has had regard to the Council Strategy and the priorities of the Executive when developing its work programme.
Core Business:	X			The report demonstrates that the Council has had regard to the Council Strategy and the priorities of the Executive when developing its work programme. This includes areas where under-performance has been identified.
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	Councillor Carolyn Culver (Scrutiny Commission Chairman) Councillor Martha Vickers (Health Scrutiny Committee Chairman) Vicky Phoenix, Principal Policy Officer (Health Scrutiny)			

4 Supporting Information

Background

- 4.1 The Annual Scrutiny report 2024/25 provides a summary of the work of the Scrutiny Commission, and Health Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.2 The report provides:
- an overview of scrutiny's role;
 - details of how scrutiny is carried out in West Berkshire, and jointly with neighbouring local authorities;
 - an insight into how the scrutiny work programme was developed; and
 - a summary of scrutiny activity for each meeting.
- 4.3 Items of particular interest are described in further detail.
- 4.4 The report concludes with a summary of decisions that were called-in prior to implementation and the resolution in each case.

Proposals

4.5 For Council to be informed of the annual Scrutiny Report for 2024/25.

5 Other options considered

None – the report is for information only.

6 Conclusion

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

7 Appendices

Appendix A – Scrutiny Commission Annual Report 2024/25

Background Papers:

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

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is for information only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: N/A

Officer details:

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

Scrutiny Annual Report 2024-25

(May 2025)



West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

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Foreword

This has been another busy year for the Scrutiny Commission and Health Scrutiny Committee and their task and finish groups. In the following pages you will see a summary of the work of our committees, including our important work scrutinising the council's finances. In spring 2025, the council successfully applied for Exceptional Financial Support from central government and the Executive, supported by officers, is working hard to avoid the issuance of a section 114 notice. This makes effective financial scrutiny more important than ever.

Scrutiny Commission examined the growing challenge of trying to provide services within budget for the special education needs and disabilities High Needs Block. Increasing financial deficits in this service area are faced by all top-tier local authorities and will only be resolved by bold action from central government, but while we wait for that day to come it is clear that West Berkshire Council officers are working hard to meet our statutory obligations.

The Health Scrutiny Committee responded to residents' concerns and represented the needs of the local population with health service providers and commissioners. It brought together key organisations who support and provide health services such as for mental health and primary care to ensure that local needs were considered in service delivery and commissioning plans.

We would like to thank everyone who has played a part in the scrutiny process over the past 12 months including Members of the Scrutiny Commission and Health Scrutiny Committee, and backbenchers who have served on task and finish groups. The quality of scrutiny is only as good as the effort Members are prepared to devote to the task. We serve our residents by fulfilling our privileged role of challenging those with positions of power within the council and ensuring their accountability. We must act independently and transparently, and be seen to do so by residents, if we are to maintain their trust in scrutiny.

Our thanks also to the officers who have made such an important contribution to the scrutiny process, including Gordon Oliver and Vicky Phoenix. We would also like to thank external guests who have attended meetings to give evidence and submit their organisations' roles in service provision to scrutiny.

Councillor Carolyn Culver
Chairman, Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Martha Vickers
Chairman Health Scrutiny Committee

1. Key Information About Overview and Scrutiny

1.1 Scrutiny's Role

- 1.1.1 The role of scrutiny is to improve the lives of residents through improved public services and ensuring that public funds are spent effectively.
- 1.1.2 Scrutiny committees have the power to look at any issue which affects the area or the area's residents. This gives them a unique legitimacy to examine cross-cutting issues in a way that no other individual or organisation can.
- 1.1.3 Key roles for scrutiny committees include:
 - Holding the Executive and other decision makers to account;
 - Policy development and review;
 - External scrutiny;
 - Performance management.
- 1.1.4 The principles of good scrutiny are:
 - To provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge;
 - To amplify the voice and concerns of the public;
 - To be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role;
 - To drive improvement in public services.

1.2 Operation of Overview and Scrutiny in West Berkshire

- 1.2.1 West Berkshire Council currently has two scrutiny committees – the Scrutiny Commission and the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2.2 The Scrutiny Commission is responsible for reviewing the decisions, policies and services of West Berkshire Council and, in some cases, those of other organisations and partners. In particular, the Commission acts as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, undertaking scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership.
- 1.2.3 It comprises of nine Members, reflecting the political composition of the local authority. During 2024/25, the Commission was chaired by Councillor Carlyne Culver. Other Members were Councillors Antony Amirtharaj, Dominic Boeck, Jeremy Cottam, Paul Dick, Ross Mackinnon, Justin Pemberton (prior to being appointed to the Executive), Erik Pattenden, Christopher Read, and Martha Vickers (replacing Justin Pemberton).
- 1.2.4 The Scrutiny Commission had five scheduled meetings in 2024/25, plus a special meeting focusing on scrutiny of the council's section 19 report into the winter flooding of 2024, and the work of Thames Water and the Environment Agency.
- 1.2.5 Topics were either considered at a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission or delegated to a time-limited task and finish group, with findings reported back to the Scrutiny Commission.

- 1.2.6 The Health Scrutiny Committee focuses on matters related to the provision of health and public health services within West Berkshire and fulfils the statutory health scrutiny functions.
- 1.2.7 In 2024/25, it comprised of five Members, reflecting the political composition of the local authority. It was chaired by Councillor Martha Vickers. Other Members who sat on the Committee in the last year were Councillors Nick Carter, Owen Jeffrey, Jane Langford, Justin Pemberton (prior to being appointed to the Executive), and Stephanie Steevenson (replacing Justin Pemberton). The Health Scrutiny Committee had four scheduled meetings in 2024/25.
- 1.2.8 West Berkshire Council also has two Members on the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (BOB JHOSC). For 2024/25, these were Councillors Martha Vickers and Stephanie Steevenson. The other Members of the BOB JHOSC are drawn from Buckinghamshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council, with numbers reflecting the population of each local authority, as well as the political composition for each Council. The BOB JHOSC reviews activities relating to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). Members attended one meeting in 2024/25.

1.3 Community Involvement

- 1.3.1 The Scrutiny Commission and Health Scrutiny Committee engage with a wide selection of groups, organisations and individuals when undertaking their reviews.
- 1.3.2 Healthwatch West Berkshire is invited to give an update at all Health Scrutiny Committee meetings to provide feedback from patients and service users. Other stakeholders are invited to give evidence in relation to specific reviews, either individually or collectively (e.g., via surveys).
- 1.3.3 All scrutiny meetings are open to the public and residents are welcome to come along and listen to the presentations and debates. Task and Finish Group meetings tend to take place in private, but their reports are made public and are discussed at the relevant scrutiny committee which agrees the recommendations to be referred to the Executive, relevant health body, or other external organisation.
- 1.3.4 Members of the public are able to suggest topics for scrutiny by [completing our online form](#). Members of the public are also invited to comment and inform Members' questions on Health Scrutiny Committee key agenda items to ensure that the voice of the local population is heard.

2. Scrutiny Work Programme

2.1 Complementing the Work of the Executive

- 2.1.1 The Scrutiny Commission seeks to complement the work of the Executive. Liaison is undertaken with Members of the Executive and senior officers to understand their priorities for the coming year and identify any areas where

there are concerns about performance. This helps to highlight areas where scrutiny could add value.

2.2 Pre-Decision Scrutiny

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

2.3 Post-Decision Scrutiny

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

2.4 Scrutiny of Partners and Third Parties

- 2.1.4 The Council has statutory duties to undertake scrutiny of services delivered by particular external partners, especially around areas such as crime and disorder, education, and health. These parties are legally required to attend scrutiny meetings, provide the information as requested, and answer questions. In the case of health partners, they must respond to any recommendations made by the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.1.5 Health partners are also required to consult the Health Scrutiny Committee on proposed substantial variations to services that would be likely to affect residents of West Berkshire. A Memorandum of Understanding has been developed with local NHS stakeholders to help inform this process.
- 2.1.6 The Local Government Act (2000) also gives scrutiny committees the power to investigate and report on any matter which affects a local authority's area or its inhabitants. This type of scrutiny brings its own challenges, as most other organisations are not legally obliged to participate in scrutiny reviews.

2.5 Prioritisation

- 2.1.7 Once potential review topics have been identified, it is important to prioritise them into a realistic work programme. The PAPER tool has been developed to help rank competing proposals. This considers the following aspects:
- Public interest
 - Area affected
 - Performance Issues / Local Priority
 - Effectiveness
 - Available Resources

3. Summary of Activity for 2024/25

3.1 Scrutiny Commission

3.1.1 The Scrutiny Commission met six times in 2024/25. Details of the topics considered are set out below.

Date	Topics
17/07/2024	Draft Waste Strategy
	2023/24 Performance Report Year End
	Revenue Financial Outturn 2023/24
	Capital Financing Report Outturn 203/24
	Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24
24/09/2024	Crime and Disorder Committee - Community Safety Update
	Adult Social Care Complaints Report 2023/24
	Children's Social Care Complaints Report 2023/24
	SEND High Needs Block and Delivering Better Value
	Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group Report
17/10/2024	Winter Flooding 2024 Debrief
	Section 19 Flood Report
	Thames Water and Environment Agency
26/11/2024	Response to Faraday Road Football Ground Queries
	Unregistered & Unregulated Provision in Children's Social Care
	Early Intervention and Family Help
	MTFS and Revenue Budget 2025/26 Planning
11/02/2025	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2025/26
	Medium Term Financial Strategy
	Capital Strategy, Financial Years 2025/6 to 2034/35
	Revenue Budget 2025/26
	Financial Year 2024/25 Quarter Three Capital Financing Performance Report
	2024/25 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Three
13/03/2025	Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation
	Draft Waste Management Strategy

3.1.2 The Scrutiny Commission ran two Task and Finish Groups in 2024/25. The Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group concluded its review of the

Council's response to the Covid pandemic and subsequent recovery. Its findings were reported to Scrutiny Commission in September 2024, with recommendations subsequently presented to the Executive in February 2025.

3.1.3 The work of the Sports Hub Task and Finish Group is ongoing.

3.2 Health Scrutiny Committee

3.2.1 The Health Scrutiny Committee met four times in 2024/25. Details of the topics considered are set out in the table below.

Date	Topics
11/06/2024	Healthcare in New Developments Task and Finish Group – Final Report
	Public Health West Berkshire – Annual Report
	Update on the Diabetes Service
23/09/2024	Adult Mental Health
	Suicide Prevention
10/12/2024	Eastfield House Surgery Proposed Relocation
	All Age Continuing Care
	Access to GP Services
11/03/2025	Oral Health and Dentistry
	South Central Ambulance Service
	Social Care Inquests

3.2.2 The Health Scrutiny Committee undertook deep dives via task and finish groups. The Healthcare in New Developments Task and Finish Group reported its findings in June 2024, with recommendations going Executive. The Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task and Finish Group is due to report to the September 2025 Health Scrutiny Committee.

3.2.3 The Health Scrutiny Committee maintains watching briefs on topics such as the Royal Berkshire Hospital Redevelopment, Hampshire Hospitals new hospital programme (both of which were recently pushed back until at least 2040) and Continuing Healthcare. Members engage with the relevant key partners through informal briefings and other mechanisms. The Committee also responds to notifications of proposed changes to NHS services.

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

3.3.1 The BOB JHOSC met once in 2024/25 to consider the following topics.

Date	Topics
22/11/2024	Primary Care Update
	Digital and Data Update

4. Scrutiny Highlights for 2024/25

4.1 SEND High Needs Block and Delivering Better Value

4.1.1 The Scrutiny Commission received an update on the High Needs Block (HNB) Deficit in September 2024. At that time the HNB deficit was forecast to reach at least £15M by the end of 2024/25 and £65M by the end of 2028/29. An update was also provided on work being done through the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme to address the HNB deficit.

4.1.2 Contributory factors for the HNB overspend were identified as:

- The rising level of need
- Increasing complexity of high needs services
- Insufficient places available to meet the needs of increasingly complex cases
- Increased use of independent provision
- Extension of post-16 support to 25 for pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Increasing numbers of pupil exclusions
- NHS services, such as CAMHS, failing to keep up with demand

4.1.3 The DBV programme aims to help local councils and partners improve their support for children and young people with SEND and to ensure these are sustainable. It 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 the Department for Education (DfE) to assess impact.

4.1.4 Questions were asked about the following aspects:

- How the success of the DBV programme would be measured.
- How the Council would reduce the number of costly Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) while still meeting the needs of service users.
- Where the Council was within the DBV process.

- What lessons had been learned from other local authorities who were further ahead in the DBV programme, and what positive outcomes had been delivered for pupils in these areas.
- The proposed restructure of Children's Services, the future of DBV temporary posts, and how the work of task groups would be embedded in the service.
- How the approach to pupil exclusions could be made more consistent across schools and whether the Council could get involved in exclusions from academies.
- Clarification in relation to changes to pupil funding banding arrangements.
- Reasons as to why educational psychologists employed by the Council were leaving, and what was being done to fill the vacancies.
- Whether the lack of educational psychologists was impacting on the support provided to pupils and expenditure on the HNB.
- Why EHCP annual reviews had not been carried out in all cases.
- When the next Ofsted SEND inspection would be due.

4.1.5 The Scrutiny Commission made the following suggestions:

- Officers should propose a formal programme at the national level to share findings/best practice relating to the DBV programme amongst all participating local authorities.
- Given the importance of the HNB deficit, for the Scrutiny Commission to receive further updates every 6 months, including details of the performance dashboard once this had been developed. (The March 2025 update was postponed until July 2025 because officers were focused on Ofsted inspections.)

4.1.6 Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Tuesday 24 September 2024, 6.30 pm](#)

4.2 Covid and Recovery Task and Finish Group

4.2.1 The Scrutiny Commission set up 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.

4.2.2 The review focused on five core areas:

- Local resilience and preparedness for the pandemic
- Public health and emergency community support
- Support for local businesses
- Support for the education sector
- Support for the care sector

- 4.2.3 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/former officers, and representatives from partner organisations who supported in delivery of the local response.
- 4.2.4 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.
- 4.2.5 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.
- 4.2.6 Through evaluation of this evidence base and with technical support from officers, Members were able to highlight a number of issues and pinpoint where potential improvements could be made, or where further work would be beneficial.
- 4.2.7 The Task and Finish Group report was presented to the Scrutiny Commission on 24 September 2024. The Scrutiny Commission resolved that the report's recommendations be referred to the Executive for consideration, with minor amendments.
- 4.2.8 Councillor Patrick Clark, the portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health, provided a formal response to the report's 22 recommendations, at the meeting of the Executive on 13 February 2025. In summary:
- Ten of the recommendations had already been implemented by the date of the meeting
 - Eight recommendations were accepted or partially accepted
 - Four recommendations were rejected due to challenges related to practicality of implementation, uncertainties unique to each pandemic, and decisions being outside of the role of the local authority.
- 4.2.9 Implementation of the report's recommendations will help to ensure that the Council is better prepared for a future pandemic event.

4.3 Budget Scrutiny

- 4.3.1 The Scrutiny Commission received a report in November 2024 on the Medium Term Financial Planning forecasts, which set out the significant level of savings that would be required for the 2025/26 budget. The report also outlined proposals to deliver the required savings, which were the subject of a public consultation exercise between 11 November and 23 December 2024. This allowed Members to have earlier involvement and provided an opportunity to help shape the budget for 2025/26, which was welcomed.
- 4.3.2 Members challenged a number of points in relation to the public consultation exercise, particularly in relation to proposals to switch off street lighting between 12 – 5am, and Downlands Leisure Centre.
- 4.3.3 In addition, there was discussion about:
- The impacts of applying for Exceptional Financial Support

- Risks associated with inflation
 - The impacts of future increases in employers' NI contributions
 - The cost of children's social care
 - The government's approach to the High Needs Block
 - The impacts of proposed cuts to mobile libraries
 - The appropriate balance of short-term vs long-term borrowing
 - The potential impact of additional Council Tax contributions
- 4.3.4 Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Tuesday 26 November 2024, 6.30 pm](#)
- 4.3.5 There was also an opportunity for detailed scrutiny of the budget in February 2025, before the budget went to Executive and onwards to Council for final approval.
- 4.3.6 This provided Members with a detailed explanation of the process that had been followed in developing the budget and an opportunity to challenge the underlying assumptions and allocations to ensure they were robust.
- 4.3.7 The Scrutiny Committee reviewed the following:
- Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2025/26
 - Medium Term Financial Strategy
 - Capital Strategy, Financial Years 2025/26 to 2034/35
 - Revenue Budget 2025/26
- 4.3.8 Key points arising from the debate, included:
- Concerns about the impacts of the High Needs Block deficit and exploration of measures being used to address this.
 - Contingency plans to avoid breaching the Capital Financing Requirement in 2027/28 if the Dedicated Schools Grant override is withdrawn.
 - Questions related to the Council's investment risk profile and liquidity position.
 - Use of artificial intelligence to reduce costs.
 - Concerns about increasing costs associated with spend on social care and home to school transport.
 - Discussions about how emergency financial support would be used.
 - Reasons for the collection fund deficit.
 - Likely impacts of future changes to the local authorities funding formula.
 - Risks and benefits of the proposal to develop and operate a solar farm.

- Concerns about the Council potentially breaking its own best practice rule whereby annual capital financing costs was forecast to exceed 10% of net revenue.
- 4.3.9 Scrutiny of the budget was welcomed by both officers and Members of the Executive.
- 4.3.10 Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Tuesday 11 February 2025, 6.30 pm](#)
- 4.4 Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task and Finish Group**
- 4.4.1 The Health Scrutiny Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of children's mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- 4.4.2 The scope of the review focussed on three key areas:
- Assessment of the current needs and provisions in West Berkshire.
 - The system approach to prevention, early intervention and mental health support for young people.
 - Extensive, evidence informed treatment and crisis services.
- 4.4.3 The Task and Finish Group held five sessions between November 2024 and May 2025 to hear from key stakeholders. These included Council officers and representatives from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Berkshire Youth, Time to Talk, Swings and Smiles, and local schools.
- 4.4.4 To understand the local landscape of needs and provisions in West Berkshire, the Task and Finish Group convened witnesses from public health, youth services, counselling services and health. Members were provided with public health data, youth survey results and best practice guidance.
- 4.4.5 To drill down on the experiences of young people and the provisions available for early help and support, the Task and Finish Group brought together witnesses from a local primary and secondary school, the Local Authority's Mental Health Support Team, and the Emotional Health Academy. Youth services, health, education and voluntary sector colleagues supported the conversation. The evidence shared included overviews of the approach by services and schools, as well as the local opportunities and constraints faced.
- 4.4.6 Health colleagues shared with Members detailed evidence on the wide-ranging services provided by Berkshire Healthcare for supporting children and young people with more complex mental health needs. Members reviewed detailed reports provided on service delivery, performance, concerns and barriers faced.
- 4.4.7 During the sessions, partners shared experiences and expertise with Members and colleagues. Through the discussions partners collaborated, shared ideas and learnt from one another. This has helped to build relationships and generate ideas and actions for change.
- 4.4.8 The Task and Finish Group report will be presented to the Health Scrutiny Committee in September 2025 which will highlight the key findings and recommendations for improvements.

4.5 Eastfield House Surgery

- 4.5.1 The Health Scrutiny Committee were contacted by a number of local residents concerned about the relocation of a local GP surgery, Eastfield House, from its current location near to Newbury town centre to a purpose-built practice on land south of Newbury College.
- 4.5.2 In October 2024, Members of the Health Scrutiny Committee visited Eastfield House Surgery to meet with GPs and the Practice Manager to understand the challenges faced by the surgery at their current location and their plans to relocate.
- 4.5.3 The Health Scrutiny Committee invited representatives from Eastfield House surgery to provide information on their proposed move and to answer Members questions at a public meeting in December 2024. There was discussion on:
- The consultation process and engagement activities with patients, residents and other stakeholders.
 - The constraints and limitations currently faced by Eastfield House surgery.
 - The opportunities arising from a health hub with purpose-built facilities.
 - Concern was raised that the new location may be difficult to access for patients who did not have access to a car and that it would particularly impact people with limited mobility.
- 4.5.4 The Health Scrutiny Committee made the following suggestions:
- Eastfield House to consider the impact of increased travel for patients most affected by the move to the new location.
 - Consultation with patients to continue as the plans progressed.
 - Eastfield House Surgery to continue to engage with the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.5.4 Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for the Health Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 10 December 2024 1.30pm](#)
- 4.5.5 This is a notifiable reconfiguration that affects a large number of patients and is a substantial variation in service. The Commissioners (BOB ICB) must therefore formally notify the Health Scrutiny of this change and so this will remain in view of the committee as the plans progress.

4.6 Stakeholder Engagement and Monitoring Outcomes

- 4.6.1 The Health Scrutiny Committee work with service providers and commissioners outside for public meetings to review and monitor progress where concerns have been highlighted. These included Continuing Healthcare, Access to GP services, Dementia services, and South Central Ambulance Service. Oral Health and Dentistry has been highlighted for review in 2026.
- 4.6.2 Of particular note, the Health Scrutiny Committee has kept in view concerns raised by residents that approvals for patients in Berkshire West (which includes West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham) for Continuing Healthcare have

been consistently amongst the lowest in England, and significantly lower than those in other parts of the BOB footprint. NHS Continuing Healthcare (NHS CHC) is a package of care for adults aged 18 or over which is arranged and funded solely by the NHS. During the last year, Members of the Health Scrutiny Committee met representatives from the BOB ICB and Adult Social Care informally outside of Committee meetings. These informal check-ins enabled scrutiny and oversight of the transformation programme and organisational change that the BOB ICB were undergoing. The BOB ICB were also requested to provide evidence and answer Members questions on their progress at a Health Scrutiny Committee in public in December 2024 and June 2025. This will continue to remain under review by the Health Scrutiny Committee.

- 4.6.3 Further details of this meeting can be viewed on the Council's website: [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for the Health Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 10 December 2024 1.30pm](#)

5. Call-In of Decisions

- 5.1 The call-in process is used to hold the Executive to account. The purpose of a call-in is to scrutinise the decisions taken by the Executive, Individual Executive Members, or Senior Officers making delegated decisions.
- 5.2 The process enables further public debate to be held on the subject. The Scrutiny Commission can then consider whether, in their view, the decision was appropriate or if it wishes to make recommendations back to the Executive on potential changes.
- 5.3 No decisions were called-in during 2024/25.

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 14 – Notice of Motions

Verbal Item

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Council – 17 July 2025

Item 15 – Member Questions

To Follow

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