

Notice of Meeting



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Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 6.30pm
in the Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

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Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday 17 November 2025

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager) on (01635) 519462

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Agenda - Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee to be held on Tuesday 25 November 2025 (continued)

- To:** Councillors Carlyne Culver (Chairman), Ross Mackinnon (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Jeremy Cottam, Laura Coyle, Erik Pattenden, Christopher Read, Richard Somner and Howard Woollaston
- Substitutes:** Councillors Adrian Abbs, Dennis Benneyworth, Paul Dick, Billy Drummond, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Biyi Oloko and Clive Taylor

Agenda

Part I

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Agenda - Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee to be held on Tuesday 25 November 2025 (continued)

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|----|---|-----------|
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Sarah Clarke

Sarah Clarke
Executive Director - Resources

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

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Agenda Item 1

Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee
25 November 2025

Item 1 – Apologies

Verbal Item

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DRAFT

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

RESOURCES AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2025

Councillors Present: Carlyne Culver (Chairman), Ross Mackinnon (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Laura Coyle, Erik Pattenden, Christopher Read, Richard Somner, Howard Woollaston and Alan Macro (Substitute) (In place of Jeremy Cottam)

Also Present: Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Executive Director (Resources)), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director - Place), April Peberdy (Service Director - Community Services), Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director for Finance, Property and Procurement, Section 151 Officer), Gabrielle Mancini (Service Director - Transformation, Customer and ICT), Elizabeth Beverley (Libraries Manager), Councillor David Marsh, Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Nicola Thomas (Service Lead - Legal and Democratic Services), Councillor Jeff Brooks, Councillor Tom McCann, Councillor Vicky Poole, Councillor Nigel Foot, Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer (Scrutiny & Dem Services)) and Felicity Harrison (Libraries Manager)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Jeremy Cottam

PART I

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Actions from previous Minutes

Members reviewed the actions from the previous meetings. The following points were noted:

Members agreed to suspend standing orders to allow Ms Paula Saunderson to address the Committee on action points 116 and 143 in relation to activity of Thames Water and the Environment Agency.

116 and 143 (Thames Water and Environment Agency) – Councillor Carlyne Culver explained that an update on progress with the business case had been requested.

Ms Saunderson noted that evidence of severe pollution at the Northbrook had been presented when the issue was first raised in October 2023. Since that time, concerns had been raised of contamination from historic landfill which created a health hazard with ground water flooding in residential gardens. Thames Water had conducted research on the issues and had reported that no evidence had been found of foul water contaminating the Northbrook. The Environment Agency had advised that pollution testing of the Northbrook was not a priority for them at the present time with a number of competing priorities to manage.

Ms Saunderson asked that the Council take action as corporate landlord by requesting that testing take place of non-dissolvable pollutants and for cameras to be installed to monitor the situation and help identify ways to resolve it.

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Councillor Culver confirmed that these would be actions for the Council to consider undertaking as landlord.

212 (Faraday Road Football Ground) – Councillor Nigel Foot explained that an update on the project plan and objectives for Faraday Road would be provided at the Executive on 25 September 2025.

223 (Thatcham Sewage Works) – Councillor Culver explained that the concerns with the sewage works being at capacity and action needing to be taken as a result were being progressed by the relevant Portfolio Holders (Councillors Stuart Gourley and Denise Gaines).

156, 157 and 232 (Waste Strategy) – discussion on the Waste Strategy was scheduled on the Work Programme for March 2026. This would need to cover implications of the move to three weekly black bin collections.

(Councillor Ross Mackinnon joined the meeting at 6.40pm)

236, 237 and 238 (Corporate Programme) – actions remained outstanding. It was however noted that the action relating to iTrent implementation would be incorporated within the work of the Project Management Task Group.

239 (Policy Development Group) – the next meeting of the Policy Development Group was provisionally scheduled for 2 October 2025 to discuss viable villages.

240 (Capital Financing Report Outturn 2024/25) – a response to the query as to why the project 'Special Education Mental Health and Autism Spectrum Disorder Reduced Provision' had slipped had been circulated prior to the meeting. This explained that £214,210 (the High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) Grant) had been slipped to 2025/26 to meet outstanding commitments, complete post occupation security works and final retention release.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Howard Woollaston declared an interest in Agenda Items 7 (Library Service) and 10a (Sports Hub) by virtue of the fact that he was the Shadow Portfolio Holder for both of these areas, but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debates and any votes on these matters.

4 **Petitions**

There were no petitions received at the meeting.

5 **Review of Transformation Programme**

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 6) which provided an update on the outcomes delivered to date by the Council's transformation programme, additional projects supported, recent departmental restructuring and leadership changes, and the planned development of a new forward looking transformation plan. This was an invest to save programme aiming to achieve efficiencies and effectiveness across the Council.

Councillor Vicky Poole, the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and the Corporate Programme, introduced the report. The transformation programme had been running for a two year period and in that time transformation had become widely embedded across the organisation. A number of successes had been achieved and in particular, Councillor Poole highlighted the Walnut Close temporary accommodation project. This had done much in supporting individuals who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless as well as achieving cost avoidance and savings.

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Gabrielle Mancini (Service Director for Transformation, Customer and ICT) explained that the decision was made two years ago to pull together transformation projects and the Service Director role was created to take this forward. Six projects were identified for the original programme based on the potential for savings and the outcomes that could be achieved. These six projects were as follows:

- Business Support Review
- Strategic Asset and Locality Service Delivery Model
- Place Service Improvement Plan
- Corporate Recruitment Review
- Review of care home provision
- Review of home to school transport

The LGA Peer Review, conducted in January 2024, endorsed the principles of the transformation programme, alongside noting the spread of projects across the Council. This contributed to holding an internal restructure which resulted in centralising transformation to better track progress and achieve benefits. Policy Development Group (PDG) meetings would be taking place to further progress transformation work.

Councillor Jeff Brooks took the opportunity to highlight further successes. Greater efficiencies had been achieved in recruitment processes and retention (as part of the Employee Value Proposition). Annual savings in the region of £5m-£6m were being achieved from reduced employment of freelance/temporary contractors.

He did however acknowledge that work to review care home provision had not progressed as had been hoped as private sector organisations had not come forward to potentially run the Council's care homes. That said, greater efficiencies had been delivered in the care homes and savings achieved, whilst continuing, most importantly, to support residents with their care needs.

Councillor Brooks added that service areas were progressing transformation, beyond the six specific projects. Transformation was embedded across projects that were being run from the centralised team. Transformation was a continually evolving process that would continue to work to improve services as well as making savings.

Councillor Carlyne Culver highlighted the need to be clear on net costs, including officer time, to fully understand the level of savings being made. She then invited questions and comments from Members, and a number of points were discussed in the debate.

Efficiencies achieved in relation to home to school transport were contractual and in terms of route optimisation. It was noted that transport costs for SEND pupils (pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) could be high as placements could often be outside of the district. Therefore, wider discussions were ongoing in relation to the availability of SEND placements within West Berkshire.

Gabrielle Mancini agreed to provide information on whether improvements had been achieved to the waiting list for home to school transport.

Councillor Chris Read noted that it was a difficulty using larger vehicles when it came to navigating rural roads. He raised the importance of considering social impacts/benefits for home to school transport as well as looking to reduce costs. Gabrielle Mancini assured Members that social aspects were considered above financial benefits.

In some cases, officers were moving from service areas to the centralised service. This was being undertaken within the same financial envelope.

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The move to a centralised service was to achieve greater consistencies and greater benefit realisation. However, the need for specialist officers for projects was also recognised and portfolio managers would be appointed to support this.

In response to a question in relation to monitoring performance via key performance indicators (KPIs), Gabrielle Mancini explained that this would be part of the work undertaken by the PDG. Individual business cases were required and progress with them was tracked. This could be a role for Scrutiny Members.

Councillor Poole explained that new policies and procedures were being formed to strengthen the programme and would include thresholds for escalation should this be needed with a project. The mechanisms for considering new projects would be part of the PDG's discussions.

Councillor Brooks added that each project would have its own business case which would be monitored. Focus would be given to points including project delivery and return on investment. He also made the point that some projects were ongoing and could achieve savings over a period of time.

Councillor Brooks felt there was scope for increased commercialisation of the Council's services and suggested this could also be a topic for the PDG. There was the potential to progress this as part of the Ridgeway proposal if that way forward was taken.

Councillor Read felt that it would be useful to measure the social benefits being achieved for residents. He highlighted the ongoing role for scrutiny of analysing the benefits achieved and prioritisation given to projects.

The capital spend on Walnut Close was £86k. The savings achieved (in the region of £650k) were net of staffing costs.

Councillor Alan Macro was pleased to note that the temporary supported accommodation at Walnut Close made it possible for families to be more closely located to each other and the local area. Gabrielle Mancini was pleased to report that the need for bed and breakfast accommodation for individuals and families who were homeless had been significantly reduced.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon highlighted that transformation activity took place, including on some large scale projects, under the previous Administration, prior to the past two years. Councillor Brooks acknowledged this was the case, but pointed out that the centralised approach being taken commenced in 2023.

Councillor Richard Somner noted that the Transformation Review document did acknowledge the transformation work that had been carried out pre May 2023.

Councillor Mackinnon made reference to the budget reports approved by Council in February 2025 which outlined proposed savings of £469k in the operation of resource centres, with the aim to explore delivery with the external market. However, he felt that the wording in the report in relation to exploring opportunities to co-locate services was a complete move away from the proposal in the budget reports. He queried if this decision had been made.

Councillor Mackinnon noted from the report that the saving of £469k remained. However, he queried if this was still the case as the commentary provided in the report in relation to the way forward for resource centres had changed. He was concerned that this created uncertainty for resource centre users and members of staff.

Councillor Brooks clarified that the £469k saving remained as agreed within the budget. Work on the service provision had been undertaken and it was the intention to provide an announcement/an update at the Executive on 25 September 2025.

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Councillor Poole described the process in place of moving onto a new project(s) while current projects were being finalised. A number of projects were pending and were being prioritised. There was therefore no time lost between a project concluding and another commencing. Projects would run concurrently.

Councillor Brooks explained that project management was being centralised and an officer was being recruited to take a lead on project management. This would help project delivery and reduce the risk of single points of failure.

It was noted that the Project Management Task and Finish Group had commenced its work.

Councillor Culver sought to understand whether officers engaged in transformation activity were being paid from capital or revenue funding and whether this was being monitored, including cases where the funding of a post could change, i.e. if a post was made permanent. Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director for Finance, Property and Procurement) explained that transformation activity was funded by capital receipts and this applied to all transformation officers regardless of whether they were permanent or temporary members of staff.

A written answer would be provided in response to the query from Councillor Culver seeking information on the income from selling assets, alongside costs incurred/rental income lost to fully understand the benefits achieved from transformation. Information was also sought on the costs of retaining an asset and using it in a different way vs the savings achieved.

Councillor Culver expanded on this point by querying if time spent by officers as part of business as usual (revenue costs) on transformation work was captured. Councillor Brooks agreed that it would be useful to understand this on a broad level, but it was not the intention to be overly specific, i.e. by asking officers to complete timesheets.

Gabrielle Mancini provided an assurance that time spent by senior officers in assisting project delivery fell outside of the performance of their regular duties and did not impact on the performance of their weekly hours.

Appendix A provided a summary of transformation programme savings and Councillor Culver queried those cases which showed savings and cost avoidance as zero. It was explained that some of the projects listed remained in progress or had only just commenced.

A key purpose of the project to enhance Market Street's meeting facilities was to move away from the use of Shaw House for meetings and instead seek greater commercial use of Shaw House. It was explained that work on some projects helped to unlock savings in other projects.

Councillor Somner highlighted the importance of being fully clear, with projects such as this one, on costs incurred to deliver a project vs the savings achieved. Gabrielle Mancini agreed with the importance of this, explaining that costs were fully reflected on and scrutinised as part of business cases. In the case of the Market Street project, a budget had already been identified as part of maintaining the building and was not funded by new money.

Councillor Somner requested that this level of cost detail be captured with future work/within future reports.

Gabrielle Mancini described the detailed work conducted by a Transformation Manager and two Business Analysts for the Business Support Review. A systematic analysis was conducted to identify processes and functions across the Council that were similar in nature and could be centralised.

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Councillor Poole gave as an example the work undertaken to standardise functions conducted by social care teams covering different localities across the district. This would increase resilience and efficiencies.

In response to queries on how this impacted officers who worked in a specialist team, but performed similar duties to others, Councillor Brooks explained that these officers would continue their roles. However, centralisation would serve to increase resilience and remove single points of failure.

Feedback had been obtained from those officers who performed these duties and the process models that had been developed had been validated by these officers.

In some cases, the decision was made to not centralise some activities due to, for example, their confidential nature.

Councillor Culver reinforced the need for further information on savings achieved as well as costs incurred. For example, if the savings for the Walnut Close temporary supported accommodation were fully net of spend (£86k). Gabrielle Mancini agreed to provide additional detail that would cover savings, cost avoidance and Government income that was able to be used for this project, alongside costs.

It was explained that the £50k spend on consultancy fees for the Place Service Improvement Plan (specifically Planning) was incurred prior to the formation of the Transformation Programme. It was the intention for this work to be used as a starting point by the Service Director for the Improvement Plan, but this had been delayed as the role had not been filled for a period of time. However, many service improvements had still been identified and progressed in Planning, i.e. the enhanced use of software to process planning applications.

Councillor Culver highlighted that the proposal for care homes to be managed by an external provider had not found support among all Members and she queried if this proposal would still be taken forward as it had not progressed to date. Councillor Brooks explained that a procurement process was ongoing and could therefore provide no further comment at the present time.

Councillor Culver followed this by querying the impact on the Revenue Budget of not taking this project forward as per the original timeframe. Councillor Brooks acknowledged that this had caused a strain on the budget, which had been covered as part of the outturn for Adult Social Care. It was felt that the savings identified for care home provision could still be achieved and Shannon Coleman-Slaughter clarified that a £1.2m saving was identified in this financial year. Councillor Brooks added that £600k was already forecast as being achieved.

The report noted that website improvements had led to improvements in staff recruitment. Councillor Brooks advised that retention was also improving and this linked closely with the Employee Value Proposition. This included an improved candidate experience and a positive induction programme.

The cost of employing a consultant as part of the home to school transport review was in the region of £15k. This was commissioned prior to the formation of the transformation programme. Gabrielle Mancini added that the savings for home to school transport were net figures that took account of the costs of the Transport Review Officer. The additional income from the farepayer scheme had been noted as part of the Revenue Budget.

Appendix A gave total anticipated savings of just over £3m, some of which was in delivery and some of which had been achieved. It was noted that with the reduction in agency spend, this figure rose to £7.6m.

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Councillor Culver proposed as a recommendation that a request be made for further information on savings achieved and cost avoidance, as well as all costs incurred to establish the net position and assist further scrutiny. This would capture the information in one document and could take the form of an enhanced Appendix A and/or the transformation cost tracker that had been tabled. Regular update reports were requested. This was supported by the Committee.

Councillor Brooks agreed this would be provided and suggested this enhanced information could be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee in the new year, by which time transformation work would have been reviewed by the Policy Development Group.

Actions:

- **Gabrielle Mancini to provide information on whether improvements had been achieved to the waiting list for home to school transport.**
- **Information would be provided on the income from selling assets, alongside costs incurred/rental income lost to fully understand the benefits achieved from transformation. Information would also be provided on the costs of retaining an asset and using it in a different way vs the savings achieved.**
- **Further information would be provided on savings achieved and cost avoidance, as well as all costs incurred to establish the net position and assist further scrutiny. This would capture the information in one document and could take the form of an enhanced Appendix A and/or the transformation cost tracker that had been tabled. Regular update reports were requested. The next update would be received by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 February 2026.**

RESOLVED to note:

- the achievements of the existing transformation programme and the additional projects.
- the restructure of the service and appointment of a new Service Director.
- the proposal to bring forward a refreshed transformation plan in the coming months.

6 Review of the Library Service performance and funding model

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 7), the purpose of which was to review the performance of the Library Service since the introduction of its new funding model in April 2025.

It was reported that the new offer to develop additional library services, which were chargeable, was set within the context of the current financial challenges faced by the Council.

Councillor Nigel Foot, the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside, presented the report. He started by giving his view that the team of officers and volunteers delivered an exceptional service to library users.

He gave some background to the funding situation for the Library Service over past years. The budget had reduced and so too had the level of officer resource, Wash Common Library had closed (although it had since reopened and was being successfully run by the local community), and the mobile library had reduced. Voluntary financial contributions had been sought from town and parish councils but it had not been possible to achieve the target that had been set.

The new funding model introduced in April 2025 followed a decision to move away from seeking these voluntary contributions as it was considered an unfair approach with some parishes paying for the services, while others were not able to.

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The decision was also taken to cease the mobile library service as usage was limited and the cost of replacing the vehicle was high. As an alternative, pop-up libraries and community bookshelves had begun operating. The number of visitors at these three pop-up libraries were exceeding those seen by the mobile library and it was the intention to increase their number. The pop-up libraries had proved invaluable to parishes who could be offered bespoke services. They were also an ideal place to share key information with residents.

A number of points were raised and questions asked during the debate. Summarised as follows:

- This was noted as a positive report.
- Felicity Harrison, Culture and Libraries Manager, agreed to provide national library trend data for comparison with the picture in West Berkshire.
- There had been a shortfall in the revenue budget for the Library Service over recent years, but additional Council funding of £92,900 had been added to the Library Service budget to cover this shortfall through an investment bid. The income from the chargeable services being offered was additional to the base budget and it was therefore felt that the budget had moved to a sustainable and more stable position for the future as part of the new funding model.
- E-library services had moved to being provided by a single provider and this had enabled clearer marketing of the services to take place, and this would be increased.
- Councillor Foot explained his intention to attend many parish and town council meetings both to promote the services being offered and as a chance to gain information on local needs.
- It was explained that it was possible to access data on library users, i.e. their postcodes, to help build the picture of where users were accessing library services to help inform the Council and parishes. The Library Service annual report for 2024/25 had recently been sent to all parishes which included information on service provision, this would assist with promotion.
- Very useful information had been provided by the mobile library driver on the best locations to locate pop-up libraries. There was however no set criteria, and approaches were welcomed from all parish and town councils.
- Praise was given by Members who had attended pop-up libraries in their Wards and felt this could be usefully provided in other areas of the district. It was also felt that interested parishes could be invited to existing pop-ups to aid them in their considerations for their areas. It would be useful to involve parishes at the earliest stage possible.
- Councillor Foot took the opportunity to highlight that a recent publication of the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association included an article to highlight West Berkshire's pop-up library provision.
- Libraries were being used as a hub for the community outreach programme 'Let's Talk' which commenced in May 2025 and this included pop-up libraries. Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that libraries held a key role as information hubs for local communities, and this was one of the reasons for wanting to retain West Berkshire's libraries.
- It was acknowledged that there had been a slight decline in the number of new library members in 2024/25, but 2023/24 had proved to be a bumper year following focussed

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efforts to increase numbers through schools. It was the intention to resume this type of work to again encourage residents to become library members.

- Praise was given for the At Home Library Service and Felicity Harrison explained that there were plans to link this with community hubs and cafes across the district, and contact was being made to try and facilitate this. However, community hubs could make direct contact with officers if they wanted to take this forward.
- The enthusiastic library staff and volunteers were commended for all their efforts in their work to deliver services to West Berkshire's residents.

Action:

- **The national library trend data would be provided for comparison with the picture in West Berkshire.**

RESOLVED to note the performance of the library service since the introduction of the new funding model in April 2025.

7 Capital Financing Performance Report Q1 2025/26

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 8) which presented the provisional outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year, as forecast at Quarter One, against the approved Capital Programme and summarised the financial implications for the 2026/27 financial year.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, Leader of the Council, presented the report on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources. He explained that approximately £73m of the current year's Capital Programme was expected to be delivered.

The aim was to achieve 70-75% in year delivery of the Programme but it seemed unlikely that this would be achieved for 2025/26. Councillor Brooks advised that a complicating factor in achieving this percentage was the reprofiling of projects from the previous year. It was also the case that some projects could roll forward from year to year due to a number of factors, and improvements at Theale Railway Station was given as an example of this.

Councillor Brooks also highlighted the financial support that needed to be given to the growing pressure of the High Needs Block (HNB) within Education. This was expected to have a negative impact on what could be funded from the Capital Programme in the coming years.

A number of points were raised and questions asked during the debate. Summarised as follows:

- It was felt to be the case that providers on a project could be the cause of delays. A delayed project would likely see an increase in costs due to inflation, which was a reason for seeking delivery of projects in year.
- It was clarified that the sum of money identified for a project was not held in an account, funding for a project was brought forward at the appropriate time from, for example, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or from money received from Government grants.
- Appendix A to the report (reprofiling requests) only listed major projects whereas the figure in paragraph 2.1(a) of the report gave the full figure. Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director for Finance, Property and Procurement) agreed that a full list could be provided.
- The projects identified for reprofiling generally became clearer during the course of the year as progress with a project became clearer. Councillor Brooks clarified that

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while every attempt was made to take a project forward, slippage could occur. This could be for factors outside of the Council's control. However, the intention would remain to deliver the project and in some cases delivery could take place over a number of years.

- It was acknowledged that there was a risk of some grant funding being lost if the project in question was reprofiled. Energy projects carried a particular risk. However, it was clarified that the majority of annually reoccurring grants were awarded for a particular purpose and not a specific project.
- £16m was the original budget for the solar farm, but slippage in the project had led to this figure growing to £19m. Councillor Brooks assured Members that a strong business case remained for this project and he agreed for this to be circulated to the Committee.
- Clare Lawrence (Executive Director for Place) explained that unfortunately, it had not been possible to appoint a contractor to develop the solar farm. Procurement had therefore been restarted, via a matrix arrangement, and progress so far had been positive.
- Councillor Brooks supported the statement made in paragraph 5.6 of the report which included the point that the Council invested heavily to ensure that West Berkshire remained an affluent and prosperous area.
- It was noted that as at 31 March 2025, the Council's total level of long term borrowing to fund capital spend was £202.7m, with short term borrowing at £65m.
- The authorised limit for external debt was set at £402.9m for 2025/26. The Council was somewhat distant from that limit, but it was acknowledged that the level of debt would grow, again recognising pressures with the HNB.
- As per the Investment and Borrowing Strategy, alternative methods of borrowing and sources of funding were considered. This could include the issuing of bonds.
- A concern was raised that the Liability Benchmark was showing an increase from £241m in 2024 to £372m in 2028 (the latter figure getting close to the limit for external debt). Shannon Coleman-Slaughter explained that this was the current projection which was revised year on year with a number of factors considered. Higher borrowing would impact on repayments from the Revenue Budget.
- It was noted that the proportion of total borrowing that would mature within 12 months was around £71m and it was explained that, where necessary, debts would be refinanced in line with the Investment and Borrowing Strategy.
- Paragraph 5.14 of the report outlined that the 2025/26 Capital Programme was expected to inflate the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) to £346m. The figure from 2024/25 would be confirmed.

Actions:

- **A full list of reprofiling requests would be provided in future reports.**
- **The business case for the solar farm would be circulated to the Committee.**
- **The CFR from 2024/25 would be confirmed.**

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8 Revenue Performance Report Q1 2025/26

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 9) which outlined the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets at Quarter One of 2025/26. The report detailed the variance between the budget set in February 2025 and the current forecast of the year end position.

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Councillor Jeff Brooks, Leader of the Council, presented the report. He explained that the forecast net overspend at Quarter One was £681k after the application of transformation funding. He felt this was a satisfactory position at this point in the financial year against a net budget of £183.4m. Efforts would continue to be made to manage the forecast position throughout the year.

A number of points were raised and questions asked during the debate. Summarised as follows:

- Greater clarification would be provided of the graphs presented in paragraph 6.2 of the report.
- Approximately half of the budgeted savings for 2025/26 were on track to be delivered and it was queried if that position was likely to be maintained. Councillor Brooks explained that some risks to achieving the savings had been identified. Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director – Finance, Property and Procurement) added that Finance were in constant contact with service areas and received quarterly reports as part of ongoing efforts to achieve as many savings as possible.
- Triple Value Impact (TVI) was an organisation which specialised in process management and had advised the Council on transformation projects to pursue with the aim of achieving savings. This included the provision of software and toolkits to assist with projects. Councillor Brooks explained that a number of options had been put to the Council and it had taken time to decide which ones were best to pursue. As a result, this had delayed the achievement of savings.
- It was felt that a more suitable term should be used for savings not expected to be achieved rather than 'ragged red'.
- Net variance of £2.9m was noted for Transformation, Customer and ICT.
- The £608k saving in Adult Social Care had been identified from work to achieve efficiencies in care homes.
- It was noted that high costs could be incurred as a result of pressures within social care.
- Short term borrowing was required to be repaid in under one year. Some of this borrowing would need to be refinanced and it was agreed that the Committee would be provided with information on the profiling of this short term debt. Borrowing that needed to be repaid in future years was considered long term borrowing.
- A transformation cost tracker had been circulated to the Committee. Shannon Coleman-Slaughter explained that this covered all transformation activity across the Council and not just the activity in the official Transformation Programme. The areas listed in the cost tracker were all being applied to the revenue budget.
- There was concern that some items in the cost tracker could be considered as revenue costs. In response, Shannon Coleman-Slaughter explained that thorough reviews were undertaken of how transformation funding was being used. In the previous financial year, some areas were moved from capital expenditure to revenue.
- CouncillorCarolyn Culver felt it would be useful for Scrutiny Members to receive a private finance briefing to aid Members' understanding of factors related to the budget, such as Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) and borrowing arrangements with the Public Works Loan Board (PWL), and how best to scrutinise them. This was something she had already discussed with Councillor Iain Cottingham, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources. It would be open to all Members to attend.

Actions:

- **Greater clarification would be provided of the graphs presented in paragraph 6.2 of the report.**

RESOURCES AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 16 SEPTEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

- Information would be provided on the profiling of short term borrowing and repayment.
- A private finance briefing would be arranged for Scrutiny Members, open to all Members, to aid Members' understanding of factors related to the budget, such as Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) and borrowing arrangements with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), and how best to scrutinise them.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9 Task and Finish Group Updates:

10 Sports Hub Task and Finish Group Report

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 10a) which presented the findings of the Sports Hub Task and Finish Group (the Task Group). The Task Group had sought to determine whether there was a strategically and financially sound business case for the Monks Lane Sports Hub, whether the project was well managed, and whether reliable and consistent advice was given to Members about the project to assist them in their decision making roles.

The report proposed recommendations based on the evidence gathered which, if implemented, would help to inform the Council's approach to future sports and leisure projects.

Councillor Carlyne Culver presented the report and started with thanking her fellow Members of the Task Group: Councillors Jeremy Cottam, Paul Dick, David Marsh and Chris Read. She also thanked Gordon Oliver, the Clerk to the Task Group, and the internal and external witnesses who gave evidence to the Task Group.

Objective One: To determine whether the Sports Hub project was value for money

The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), adopted in February 2020, identified the relocation of the Faraday Road pitch as a top priority. The budget to do so (£5.6m) proved to be insufficient and, as a result, the alternative was to create six new 3g pitches over a five year period.

Costs were analysed by the Task Group as was information provided by Newbury Community Football Group (NCFG). The NCFG suggested a more cost effective approach could have been achieved. They had a business case to reopen Faraday Road approved by Sport England for £1.1m. Sport England and the Football Foundation had offered to fund 75% of the cost of works.

The Council had invested £214k-£219k into the Sports Hub but this outlay had been lost.

The Task Group felt that reopening Faraday Road would have been better value for money than the Sports Hub project.

Objective Two: To determine whether the project would have delivered on the Council's strategic objectives

The Task Group felt that there was greater potential to progress the PPS via the use of Faraday Road. The Sports Hub facility did not have the same potential as Faraday Road in terms of the level of football (tier of football) that could be achieved.

There was concern over limited public consultation.

Objective Three: To determine whether the project was well managed

Councillor Read outlined the concern that lessons identified as part of previous scrutiny reviews had not been learnt, i.e. from the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE). There

RESOURCES AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 16 SEPTEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

had also been a particular difficulty in being provided with a timeline for the Sports Hub project.

These were points that would be reflected upon as part of the Project Management Task and Finish Group.

Objective Four: To determine whether reliable and consistent advice was given to Members about the project to assist them in their decision-making roles

In summary, the Task Group did not feel that reliable and consistent advice was provided to Members at planning committees or meetings of the Executive.

A particular concern was the changing advice on whether or not there was a need to replace the Faraday Road pitch or whether the Sports Hub should be considered as a standalone project.

Sport England had stated that they would have objected to the Sports Hub proposal if it was to be a replacement for Faraday Road as it would not achieve the same standard. However, their consideration was restricted to the Sports Hub as a standalone project as that was how it was progressed through the planning process.

Objective Five: To determine whether the Council's decision to abandon the project in its original form was a strategically and financially sound decision

The Task Group was concerned that the Sports Hub project had been taken forward and that monies had been spent unnecessarily. They felt that the funding would have been more efficiently used in reopening Faraday Road and/or other aspects of the PPS.

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

No recommendations were arising from this objective.

Councillor Marsh took the opportunity to thank Councillor Culver for her dedication in Chairing the Task Group, and added thanks to the other Members on the Task Group and Gordon Oliver for their work.

He felt the 27 recommendations provided a set of robust proposals that would result in improvements with future project management.

Councillor Howard Woollaston voiced his concern with the report, feeling it did not take account of the plans put in place by the former Administration for the Faraday Road site and the Sports Hub. The proposals for the Faraday Road site would have brought many positive factors, including economic regeneration of the area, affordable housing provision and financial benefits to the Council. He felt these points had been ignored.

Councillor Woollaston acknowledged that improvements were needed in project management.

A clear business case had been produced for the Sports Hub by the organisation who had since become the Council's leisure contractor. The Sports Hub proposal would have enabled greater use than at Faraday Road and would have been available for use at a much earlier stage. He praised the superb changing room and social area facility that was proposed for the Sports Hub.

Councillor Woollaston felt the report was one sided and the Task Group would have benefited from including a Member from the previous Administration.

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Councillor Culver pointed out that Councillor Woollaston had been invited as a witness as the previous Portfolio Holder, but explained that it was not permitted to have a previous Portfolio Holder (decision maker) on the Task Group.

She added, in response to the point about changing room facilities, the view from the Task Group that the provision formally at Faraday Road should not have been allowed to deteriorate, with much of that former facility lost. This should have been maintained.

Councillor Woollaston felt that it would have been useful to return to a Task Group meeting as a witness on another occasion so that points could be clarified. Councillor Culver explained that this was not current practice for task and finish groups, but added that the scope of these groups was being reviewed.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon made a number of comments on the report. He disputed the point made that the Council was obliged to replace the Faraday Road pitch, although Sport England could request a replacement or object through the planning process. He felt the Council could choose to close a facility it owned and use the site for another purpose.

Councillor Mackinnon felt that the report did not adequately explain the roles the Council held as Local Planning Authority and as the developer for Faraday Road.

He then questioned the cost information considered by the Task Group. As stated in the report the cost of the proposed Sports Hub was £3.878m. Alongside this, the NCFG submitted documentation which outlined the cost of the Sports Hub, over a 40 year period, as being a minimum of £11.58m. The NCFG business case for Faraday Road gave initial costs of £1.1m, but not costs over a 40 year period. He did not therefore feel there had been a like for like comparison and questioned if there had been due diligence of the NCFG financial information. Councillor Mackinnon did not feel there was evidence to show that use of Faraday Road as a football pitch was better value for money than the Sports Hub as had been claimed in the Task Group's report.

Councillor Mackinnon did not feel there was evidence to support some of the claims made in the report. He questioned whether there was evidence to show that trust had been eroded in the Council as had been stated.

Turning to the consultation, Councillor Mackinnon questioned the suggestion that the consultation questions had been formed in order to obtain favourable answers and identified question one as an example where this was not the case. He did not think it appropriate to describe the consultation response as being patchy, this needed evidence. The consultation did not include questions relating to use of Faraday Road as a football pitch as the site had been identified for commercial use.

He also responded to the point made that Council Members did not have chance to seriously consider the Sports Hub plans until the planning committee meetings. He pointed out that two reports went to the Executive in 2021, prior to the planning committees, giving Members a chance to look at the proposals and ask questions.

Councillor Mackinnon concluded his comments by giving his view that the evidence of some witnesses to the Task Group had been given greater weight than others.

Councillor Culver stated that the need to replace the Faraday Road pitch was based on advice from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that it should be replaced by an equivalent or better facility.

On the cost information, the figures provided by the NCFG included the expectation that the Council would need to subsidise the Sports Hub for many years to come and these costs had not been recognised. The NCFG had also confirmed that they could obtain financial assistance with their proposal.

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Continuation of meeting - in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Part 3, point 10.8, the Committee supported the motion that the remaining business could be concluded by 10.30pm, and therefore proceeded with the meeting.

Councillor Culver felt that there had been a loss of trust in the Council among the external witnesses to the review. There had been numerous questions asked of the Council and the Executive in an effort to obtain further information. The Task Group also held the view that the Council could have done more to improve the relationship with the NCFG.

Councillor Marsh explained that the Task Group did form the view that the consultation questions were largely leading questions about whether respondents wanted to see better facilities. There was also concern that only one public consultation was held and that was at an early stage of the process.

Councillor Read added that the main bodies to the review, the NCFG and the Rugby Club, did not feel they were a partner to the Council in the project.

Councillor Mackinnon noted that the loss of trust had been raised by witnesses to the review and felt it would have been useful to clarify this in the report.

Councillor Mackinnon acknowledged that the NPPF might have requested a replacement facility but did not have the ability to insist the Council took action to achieve that end. Councillor Culver responded that if the need for a replacement facility had been made clear, then this would have given interested parties grounds on which to challenge the closure of Faraday Road without a replacement.

Councillor Mackinnon commented that the NCFG did not help with forming a positive relationship, referring to comments the group had posted on social media.

Councillor Erik Pattenden felt the Task Group had undertaken a useful exercise that had identified many valuable recommendations. His only comment was that it would have been useful for the timeline to include the date the Sports Hub project was cancelled. Councillor Culver agreed this could be added.

Action: the timeline would include the date that the Sports Hub project was cancelled.

Councillor Pattenden then proposed an amendment to the Task Group's recommendations, proposing that recommendations 23 and 25 be removed. Recommendation 23 referred to whether or not it was appropriate for Executive Members to participate on Council applications at planning committees, and Councillor Alan Macro gave the view that Members were subject to the Council's Code of Conduct and therefore needed to abide by planning law which gave clear advice on participation. Councillor Culver clarified the Task Group view that, in cases where the Council was the sponsor of a project, Executive Members should not speak to the item at a planning committee.

Recommendation 25 suggested that the Council should refer itself to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and ask them to consider this report. Councillor Macro felt this step was unnecessary, as much had been learnt from this process, and felt that such a referral would not achieve anything further. Councillor Culver commented that individual Members would be able to reserve the right to make a referral to the LGO if they wished to.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Antony Amirtharaj and put to the vote.

RESOLVED that the Amendment be approved. Recommendations 23 and 25 would be removed.

RESOURCES AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 16 SEPTEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

Councillor Jeff Brooks made it clear that the Sports Hub project was run by the Conservatives while they were in Administration and was not overseen by the current Liberal Democrat Administration.

Councillor Brooks then queried the absence of other witnesses, i.e. the former Leader (former Councillor Lynne Doherty) and the former Chief Executive of the Council (Nick Carter). In response, Councillor Culver explained that Councillor Woollaston was identified as the most appropriate witness as the former Portfolio Holder for this area of activity.

RESOLVED that with the exception of Recommendations 23 and 25, the Task Group's recommendations would be referred to the Executive for consideration.

11 Project Management Task and Finish Group Update

The Committee considered a verbal report on progress with the Project Management Task and Finish Group (Agenda Item 10b). Councillor Chris Read, the Chairman of the Task Group, gave the following update:

The Task and Finish Group held its first evidence session on 1 September, which was focused on how the Council currently manage its projects, and the following officers attended to give evidence. Councillor Read gave thanks for their time and input:

- Sarah Clarke – Executive Director (Resources)
- Gabrielle Mancini – Service Director (Transformation, Customer and ICT)
- Kate Pearson (Service Lead - Commissioning & Procurement)
- Melanie Best (Transformation & Programme Manager)

The session explored a variety of aspects including:

- Project management methodology
- Training
- Project governance arrangements
- Document management

It was clear that the project management methodology had improved significantly over time, informed by lessons learned from previous projects.

The Task Group had asked to see examples of various project documents to understand in more detail how the adopted project management methodology worked in practice. This included examples from positively run projects.

Members were informed that further changes were coming, with plans to centralise the project management resource so all project managers would come under the auspices of the Programme Management Office, rather than sitting within services. This should help to achieve a more consistent approach and encourage peer learning.

Discussions had begun on some of the issues around Care Director 6 and iTrent Phase 1, which would inform the Task Group's work over the coming sessions.

For Care Director 6, the Task Group would be surveying the front-line staff who were involved with testing/using the new software to seek their views, as well as talking to the project sponsor, project managers, and technical staff. An invitation would also be extended to the supplier to give evidence, although it was recognised that they were not compelled to do so.

RESOURCES AND PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 16 SEPTEMBER 2025 - MINUTES

The next meeting was provisionally arranged for 20 October. Looking forward, it was felt realistic to aim to complete this work and prepare the draft report in February 2026, prior to bringing the report to Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2026.

12 Appointment of Task and Finish Groups

This item was not discussed as there were no terms of reference to approve, and no changes were proposed to the membership of existing task and finish groups.

13 Executive Forward Plan September to December 2025

The Committee noted the Council's Forward Plan for the period covering 1 September 2025 to 31 December 2025.

14 Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered its Work Programme (Agenda Item 13) and discussed a number of forthcoming items.

Ridgeway Council Proposal – an Extraordinary meeting date had been provisionally arranged for this item on 1 October 2025. However, it was noted that the dates to bring this proposal forward were changing.

(Post meeting note: the dates to consider the Ridgeway Council Proposal had been confirmed for Extraordinary meetings of:

Council on 4 November 2025

Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2025

Executive on 12 November 2025).

Social Housing – a briefing note had been requested to help inform the scrutiny of this topic. Members felt that it would be beneficial to invite social housing providers to the meeting to discuss issues. The Council's Housing Officers would be liaised with on this point.

Clare Lawrence (Executive Director for Place) advised that much activity was ongoing in this area. This followed changes to the way that Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) were funded and to the Government's approach to affordable housing. Clare Lawrence suggested that the Committee be provided with information including some context of the current situation, areas of challenge and potential solutions.

Thames Water and the Environment Agency – scrutiny of this area needed to be programmed. This would need to include coverage of work on flood alleviation schemes, implications of the Section 19 report in relation to flooding and issues raised in relation to the Northbrook highlighted earlier in the meeting.

Pedestrianisation – it was felt that the proposal to bring an update on this topic to the meeting in March 2026 was correct as this would allow time for officers to consider the responses received to the public consultation.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 10.25 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee
25 November 2025

Item 4 – Declarations of interest

Verbal Item

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Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee
25 November 2025

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership



Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee November 2025

Joseph Holmes (WBC Chief Executive and Partnership Chair)
Supt. Colin Hudson (LCU Commander and Partnership Vice-Chair)

West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership



- The West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership
 - 2024/25 Achievements
 - Crime Overview

West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership



Ensuring West Berkshire is a safe place to live, learn, work and visit

Legislation

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2005

ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Act 2021

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

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

The West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership membership also includes representatives from: Community and Voluntary Sector, Healthwatch, Registered Housing Providers, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership



- **Aim:**

To work in partnership to ensure that West Berkshire continues to be a safe place to live, work, learn and visit

- **Objectives:**

- To reduce and prevent crime
- To ensure that statutory responsibilities are fulfilled
- To identify and respond to changes in the nature, incidence and severity of crime within West Berkshire
- To safeguard those who are vulnerable
- To help people and communities help each other and to engage with community safety related initiatives

West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership

Community Safety Funding Grant 2024/25

YJST Bid

Youth Prevention Work

£71,000 per year

0.8FTE contribution x 5 officers

YJST Bid

Youth Survey – school incentive

£500

Encourage participation in youth survey
£500 worth sporting equipment to school
with highest ratio of completed surveys v
number of children on roll

Alana House (PACT)

Support victims of DA whilst at RBH

£5,313

Provision of action plans
Moves to settled accommodation
Reduced/Management of debt

Berkshire Youth

Youth Detached work

£35,000 per year

2 youth workers 10 hrs p/week
Youth work delivery in id areas
Strengthened partnership working

PPP Bid

Domestic and Commercial Noise

£41,200

Purchase of noise monitoring equipment
Upgrade of 'noise app'

PPP Bid

Fraud Victim Support

£20,300

Increased support and investigation
Provision and installation of call blockers
8 Training sessions
4 Seasonal campaigns

PACT Charity

BB4K Therapeutic group recovery programme

£4,344

Supporting parents and children who have experienced
domestic abuse
Funding transport costs/ childcare/interpreters
Ensure families could attend consistently, removing
barriers for those without access

BCT Team

Virtual Reality Programme

£42,900

8 x virtual reality headsets
3 x packages impact of knife carrying, alcohol
misuse, safeguarding, choices, decision making

West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership



Safer Streets Fund 5 Project

The Nightingales Problem Solving Partnership

Since May 2023, there has been an established partnership working group consisting of the police, West Berkshire Council, Berkshire Youth, Youth Justice Support Team, Probation and Sovereign Housing. The group was established following several incidents of serious violence in The Nightingales.

The wider partnership has delivered over 81 actions ranging from enhanced police patrols, house closures to prevent anti-social behaviour, civil injunction, community surveys, enhanced stop and search, youth intervention and diversion and secured safer street funding for CCTV, community clear up days, schools intervention project and outreach work by Berkshire Youth to name a few.

Four individuals from the community linked to serious violence and the carrying of weapons have been convicted and are currently in prison.

A review of the crime and anti social behaviour reports have indicated a significant reduction in The Nightingales and as such the problem solving partnership has now concluded. The local Neighbourhood Policing team will still be patrolling the area

Operative Frith

Multi-agency problem Solving group



West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership

Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)
 New – Pangbourne Meadows
 Newbury Town Centre
 Thatcham Town Centre

Page 31

Proactive operations to test the concept in venues and licensed premises



Keep Safe with Safe Places

Local locations identified as places of safety for vulnerable people or people in need of help and visible on map.

Prevent – Section 26 Counter Terrorism And Security Act 2015 (CTSA)
 Government Prevent Training – mandatory for all staff

Bystander training sessions
 Delivered to Newbury pubwatch, Homegroup housing association, Englefield House, event location staff, youth groups, local nursing staff, Corn Exchange and a session for members of the public.
 Delivery of sessions for those working in open spaces; working with the public to enable better informed intervention in violence-based incidents

STAY TRUE TO YOU
 Promote young people staying safe, away from violence and knife crime.

West Berkshire Community Safety Partnership



Crime Overview
Supt. Colin Hudson



Domestic Abuse

Domestic related crimes have risen by 13% over the last 12 full months (August 2024 to August 2025). Positive outcomes have also risen by 11%

LCU	Crimes			Positive Outcomes		
	Previous	Current	% Change	Previous	Current	% Change
⊕ Berkshire East	6,072	5,939	-2%	557	521	-6%
⊖ Berkshire West	5,311	5,486	3%	563	527	-6%
⊕ Reading	2,536	2,538	0%	253	199	-21%
⊕ West Berkshire	1,438	1,620	13%	188	209	11%
⊕ Wokingham	1,337	1,328	-1%	122	119	-2%
⊕ Buckinghamshire	5,457	5,810	6%	578	601	4%
⊕ Milton Keynes	4,550	4,943	9%	430	406	-6%
⊕ Oxfordshire	7,402	7,793	5%	791	793	0%
⊕ LPA not recorded	147	228	55%	8	9	13%
Thames Valley	28,939	30,199	4%	2,927	2,857	-2%



Serious Violence

TVP's Serious violence dashboard is currently under construction, however below are the numbers of non-domestic violence with injury from the last full 12 month period.

LCU	Crimes			Positive Outcomes		
	Previous	Current	% Change	Previous	Current	% Change
⊕ Berkshire East	2,056	1,988	-3%	377	354	-6%
⊖ Berkshire West	2,577	2,385	-7%	458	458	0%
⊕ Reading	1,367	1,264	-8%	215	217	1%
⊕ West Berkshire	706	702	-1%	148	158	7%
⊕ Wokingham	504	419	-17%	95	83	-13%
⊕ Buckinghamshire	2,215	2,189	-1%	419	429	2%
⊕ Milton Keynes	2,162	1,979	-8%	397	432	9%
⊕ Oxfordshire	3,420	3,376	-1%	713	779	9%
⊕ LPA not recorded	38	71	87%	3	1	-67%
Thames Valley	12,468	11,988	-4%	2,367	2,453	4%

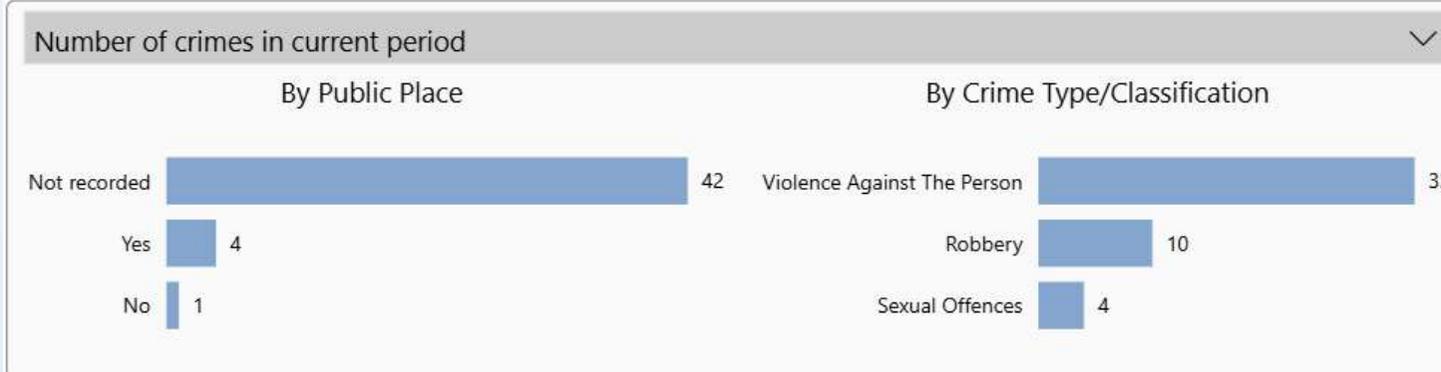
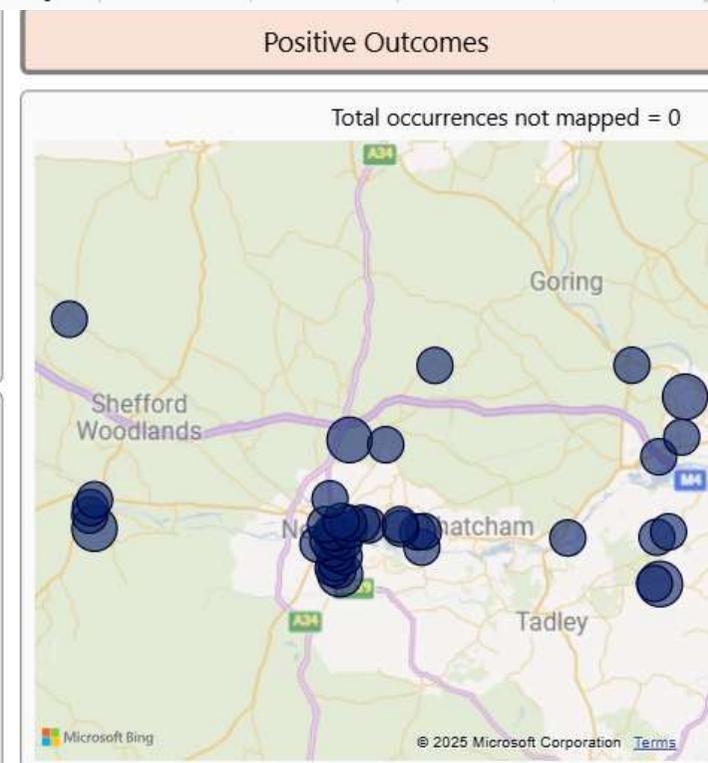


Tackling Knife Crime

Despite a small rise over the last 12 months, this equates to less than one extra incident a month (there was a spike in incidents Feb with 8 incidents). Our outcome rate for all knife crime has risen slightly.

LPA	Positive Outcome Previous	Positive Outcome Current	Positive Outcome Change	Positive Outcome % Change
Out of Force	1		-1	-100%
Oxfordshire	52	55	3	6%
Berkshire East	53	46	-7	-13%
Milton Keynes	64	68	4	6%
Buckinghamshire	43	50	7	16%
Berkshire West	35	52	17	49%
Wokingham	8	3	-5	-63%
West Berkshire	6	10	4	67%
Reading	21	39	18	86%
Thames Valley	248	271	23	9%

LPA	Crime Previous	Crime Current	Crime Change	% Change	Reduction Needed
Oxfordshire	196	215	19	10%	-19
Not recorded		4	4	0%	-4
Milton Keynes	229	225	-4	-2%	0
Berkshire West	216	193	-23	-11%	0
West Berkshire	37	47	10	27%	-10
Reading	144	120	-24	-17%	0
Wokingham	35	26	-9	-26%	0
Buckinghamshire	188	156	-32	-17%	0
Thames Valley	1,068	980	-88	-8%	0





TVP's Stop & Search data is only recorded as LCU level

Stop & Search: Searches between 03 September 2024 and 03 September 2025

Most Recent Record
2 September 2025

[Link to Stop & Search Toolkit](#)

Increase outcome rates of Stop & Searches conducted.

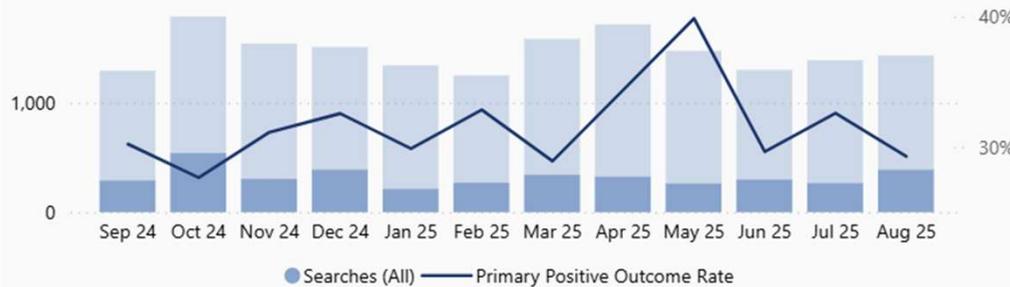
Volumes and Outcomes

Stop Searches 3,851	Primary Positive 1,202	Primary Positive Rate 31.2%	All Positive 1,377	All Positive Rate 35.8%
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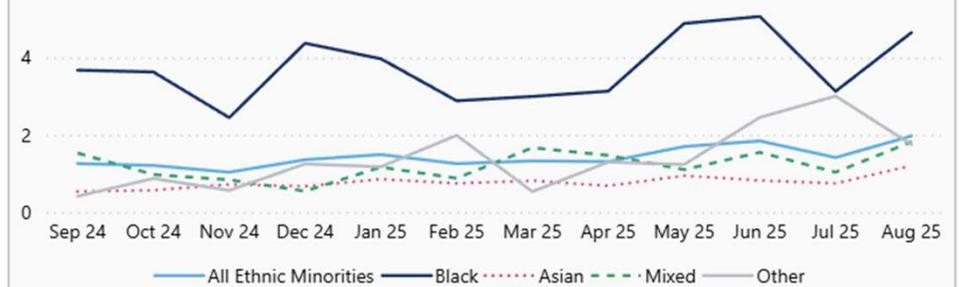
Disproportionality (Compared to White)

Ethnic Minorities 1.4	Black 3.7	Asian 0.8	Mixed 1.2	Other 1.3
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Stop Searches & Primary Positive Rates



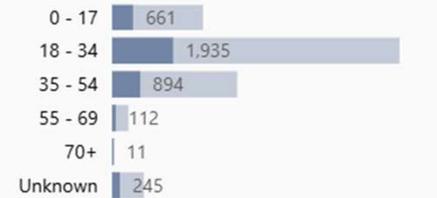
Disproportionality (based on self-defined ethnicity)



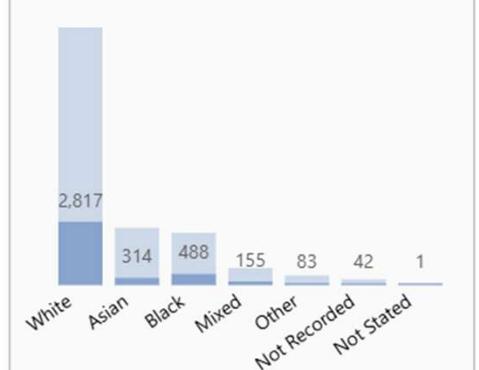
Stop Search Volumes by Month

LCU	Previous	Current Searches	% Change	Primary Positive Searches	Previous	% Change	Primary Positive Outcome Rate	Pr
Berkshire East	3,961	3,942	-0.5%	1,406	1,262	11.4%	35.7%	
Berkshire West	3,973	3,851	-3.1%	1,202	1,064	13.0%	31.2%	
Buckinghamshire	2,377	2,709	14.0%	928	728	27.5%	34.3%	
Milton Keynes	1,933	2,406	24.5%	803	592	35.6%	33.4%	
Oxfordshire	3,810	4,583	20.3%	1,592	1,198	32.9%	34.7%	
Not Recorded	8	7	-12.5%	3	4	-25.0%	42.9%	
Out of Force	48	82	70.8%	23	15	53.3%	28.0%	
Total	16,102	17,570	9.1%	5,954	4,859	22.5%	33.9%	

Age at time of Stop



Ethnicity



Gender





VAWG Crime levels and outcomes

Figures over the last 12 months show a 9% increase in positive outcomes & a 11% increase in overall offences.

LCU / LPA View		Resource Groups View					
Current Vs Previous LPA Levels							
LPA/LCU - CSP	Previous	Current	Outcome % Change	Crime % Change	Outcome rate previous	Outcome rate current	
⊕ Berkshire East	670	622	-7%	-1%	9.4%	8.8%	
⊖ Berkshire West	772	757	-2%	2%	10.5%	10.1%	
Reading	336	304	-10%	-4%	9.4%	8.9%	
West Berkshire	273	298	9%	11%	12.9%	12.7%	
Wokingham	163	155	-5%	3%	9.7%	8.9%	
⊕ Buckinghamshire	767	810	6%	4%	10.6%	10.8%	
⊕ Milton Keynes	630	673	7%	6%	10.4%	10.5%	
⊕ Oxfordshire	1,162	1,188	2%	2%	11.5%	11.5%	
⊕ LPA not recorded	0	2	0%	0%	0.0%	1.3%	
⊕ Out of Force	12	12	0%	27%	9.0%	7.1%	
Thames Valley	3,998	4,053	1%	3%	10.5%	10.4%	

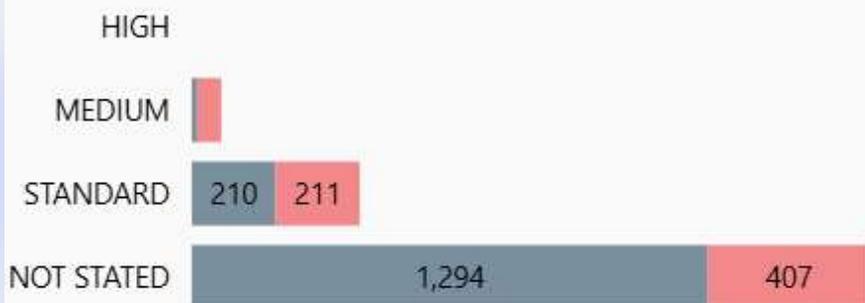


Anti-Social Behaviour Crimes & Incidents

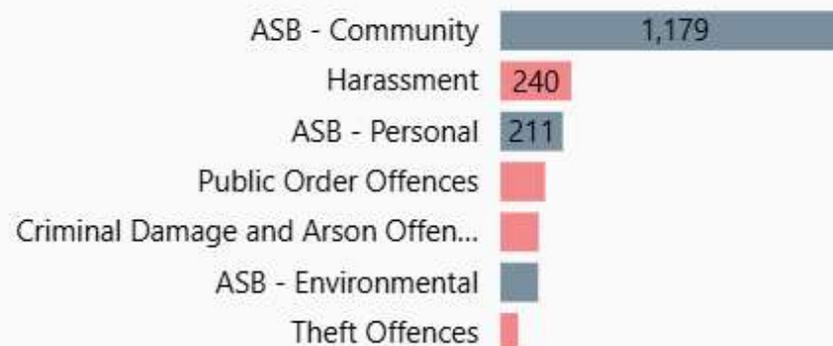
In the last full 12-month period there has been a 10% increase of ASB reports, the majority of these have been ASB community reports. (ASB incidents in grey and crime numbers in red).

LPA	Count Previous	Count Current	Count Change	% Change
⊕ Not recorded	10	40	30	300%
⊕ Milton Keynes	3,314	4,366	1,052	32%
⊕ Berkshire East	4,803	5,899	1,096	23%
⊕ Out of Force	54	64	10	19%
⊕ Buckinghamshire	4,815	5,618	803	17%
⊕ Oxfordshire	6,512	7,331	819	13%
⊕ Berkshire West	6,134	6,709	575	9%
⊕ Wokingham	1,337	1,560	223	17%
⊕ West Berkshire	2,003	2,196	193	10%
⊕ Reading	2,794	2,953	159	6%
Thames Valley	25,642	30,027	4,385	17%

By ASB Risk



By Crime Type/Occurrence Type





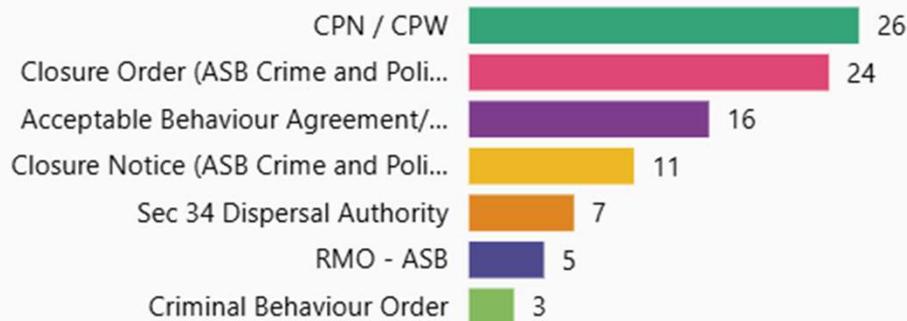
Anti Social Behaviour – Use of Powers

In the last 12 month period there has been a 61% increase of the use of ASB powers.

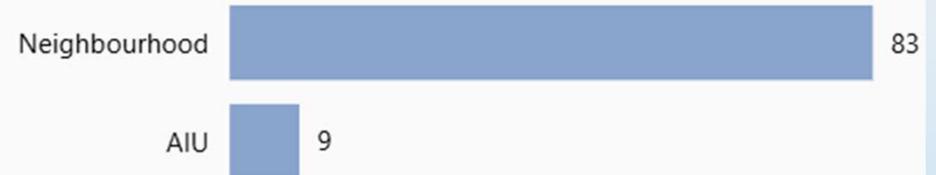
LPA	Count Previous	Count Current	Count Change	% Change	Current per 1000 Pop
⊕ Not recorded	38	103	65	171%	0.04
⊖ Berkshire West	185	368	183	99%	0.15
⊕ Reading	100	222	122	122%	
⊕ Wokingham	28	54	26	93%	
⊕ West Berkshire	57	92	35	61%	

Number in current period

By Use of Power



By OIC Type/Dept





Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee – Safer Town Centres (LCU data)

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING GUARANTEE – PILLER 5: SAFER TOWN CENTRES

RAG STATUS RAG

RAG Rationale: A really strong start to the Safer Streets – Summer of Action, with over 477 arrests already in our cities and town centres. Visibility and engagements remain high.

Safer Streets ‘Summer of Action’ – Month One (July 2025)

LCU	Retail Crime Arrests (Home Office Returns)	Street Crime Arrests (Home Office Returns)	All Arrests ('Safer Street' Areas)	Total Fines (Home Office Returns)	Use of Tools & Powers (Safer Street Areas)	E-scooter / E-bike Seizures (Safer Streets Areas)	Community Events (Including SaBA Days & HYS)	Retail Engagement Submissions (NHP App)	Other Engagement Submissions (NHP App)	Targeted Activity / Patrol Submissions (NHP App)	Visibility Submissions (NHP App)	Patrols Completed (Hotspot App)
Bucks	20	3	85	3	6	6	27	79	116	86	263	638
MK	18	4	92	17	4	18	18	26	54	95	80	377
Berks West	11	1	114	5	1	10	26	86	134	28	96	233
Berks East	5	1	103	0	3	6	26	32	60	34	95	149
Oxon	10	1	83	4	2	1	105	153	332	335	495	449
TOTAL	64	10	477	29	16	41	202	376	696	578	1029	1846



Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee – Activity in West Berkshire Town Centres.

- Op Purchase (shoplifting) operations
- Targeted high visibility foot patrol
- E-bike & E-scooter operations
- Op Vigilant deployments
- ASB targeted operations / Engagement events





Future Challenges:

Local Policing Challenges – LCU structures, cost saving, capacity (esp. analytical).

Civil Unrest – particularly around asylum issue. Need to be vigilant remains (esp. around misinformation).

Growing demands on NHPT.



Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

Committee considering report:	Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	25 November 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Denise Gaines
Report Author:	Nick Caprara

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to explore options that are available to the Council in order to deliver additional social housing and ensure that it achieves Members target of delivering 1,000 units of social housing by 2030. Recently several issues have arisen which are directly impacting the traditional mode of delivery for affordable housing locally and nationally.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to authorise that officers continue to proceed with reviewing the preferred options to facilitate increased delivery of affordable housing locally.
- 2.2 These options will include:
- The establishment of an RP Framework with partner local authorities in order to formalise and incentivise development partners.
 - Exploring the implications of accepting commuted sums on sites and to undertake further modelling on how this may affect delivery through key strategic relationships with RPs locally
 - The acceptance of a flexible approach to s106 agreements Implications and Impact Assessment.
 - Continuing to engage with the local MP to lobby government and providers to tackle significant barriers to delivery at the current time.
 - Not to proceed with the development of a Housing Company due to financial viability issues remaining significant.

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>At this time there isn't sufficient detail to assess the overall financial impact. However, if there is a reduction in available social rented homes, while there is a continued high level of demand, then there will be continued pressure on Temporary and Emergency Accommodation budgets due to homelessness presentation.</p> <p>A flexible use of S106 funding could reduce the number of housing schemes, however this could be offset by the benefits of more homes being built to supply the local area which can help contribute to emergency and temporary accommodation provision.</p>
Human Resource:	None.
Legal:	<p>The legal mechanisms are in place to amend planning obligations and to deliver alternative affordable housing.</p> <p>Some of the options in this report, for example, consenting to remove the restrictions on staircasing out in designated protected areas, will lead to the reduction of affordable housing held in perpetuity across WB.</p> <p>Possible legal challenges if the Council is not addressing the type of affordable housing that is required in WB i.e. if social rented is needed and First Homes are being provided.</p>
Risk Management:	The risks involve the potential for reduction in amount of affordable housing available both in short and long term and associated impacts which may directly impact number of households remaining in emergency and temporary accommodation in the immediate term.
Property:	None
Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Guidance is a material consideration as well as Local Planning Policy (Emerging Policy SP19 Affordable Housing). Further details are set out within the report.

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		The market issues exist and the potential reduction in affordable housing delivery is already taking place. The proposals within this report are to minimise the potential impacts. As such the impact of the proposal in this report is considered neutral.
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:				The proposal will impact upon the Council's commitment to deliver 1,000 homes by 2030
Core Business:		x		Business as usual
Data Impact:		x		

Consultation and Engagement:	Planning Officers, Housing Officers, Legal
-------------------------------------	--

3 Executive Summary

3.1 This report is presented to consider options which address challenges in delivering affordable housing under the current arrangements. It seeks to highlight the issues around relying on Section 106 (S106) agreements currently to secure affordable housing provision. The aim is to propose approve the development of alternative measures and options which could be pursued locally in order to mitigate the negative impact on new housing delivery, while ensuring consistent decision-making and adaptability to changing market conditions. If alternative options are not pursued this there is a risk that sites will not contribute towards achieving the Affordable Housing targets which have been set due to ongoing viability challenges from both developers and Registered Providers.

3.2 Summary of the Proposals

To highlight options which may facilitate greater delivery of affordable housing provision in the medium term rather than relying on traditional approaches through s106 agreements and individual negotiation on sites. Options to be explored include:

- Establishing a regional or sub-regional framework agreement between local authorities and registered providers to influence the delivery of affordable housing through the Berkshire Prosperity Board.
- Flexible approach to s106 agreements including:
 - Requests for a DPA waiver;
 - S106 variations to provide alternative tenures
 - Introduction of cascade mechanisms into S106, Introduction of more flexible S106 clauses
- Reviewing the Council's approach to accepting commuted sums on schemes where viability is an issue and utilising sums received to support RP led schemes to deliver additional social rented homes

3.3 The options will enable officers to continue to work flexibly in the approach to delivering additional affordable housing. Proposed measures provide for immediate flexibility where existing S106 requirements are proving too restrictive. However, the flexibility results in increased risk that the resulting provision may not fully accord with planning policy, may result in a reduced amount of social-rented development in the short term and reduced amount of shared-ownership housing available in perpetuity.

3.4 The approach will support with sustaining housing delivery amidst market challenges, balancing short-term needs with longer-term affordability goals. Regular monitoring and review will ensure that approach remains responsive and effective. Approval of these recommendations is crucial to addressing current obstacles and promoting continued

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

housing development Officers will also seek greater engagement with government to address the challenge of incentivising providers to enter or remain in the affordable housing market.

4 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 4.1 In April 2025 Inside Housing posed the following question “*What are the main challenges currently facing the social housing sector?*”
- 4.2 Their answer was a simple one “*Quite simply, there is not enough social housing to meet need.*”.
- 4.3 This report is intended to set out the current issues facing the Council in delivering Affordable Housing provision in the district. It sets out a number of options which may represent a departure from standard operating practice in order enable delivery to continue to meet local demand.

Background

- 4.4 The Local Plan identifies a need of 330 dwellings per annum of affordable homes over the plan period.
- 4.5 Facilitating the delivery of Affordable Housing is a key strategic priority for the Council. Members have set a target of delivering 1,000 new affordable homes by 2027.

Affordable Housing Delivery 2021 - 2025

	Social Rent	Affordable Rent	Shared Ownership	TOTAL
2021/22	86	18	65	169
2022/23	116	0	60	176
2023/24	129	75	85	289
2024/25	101	0	90	191
2025/26 (Q1)	33	0	12	45
Total	465	93	312	870

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

- 4.6 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that all households whose needs are not met by the market, and which are eligible for one or more of the types of affordable housing set out in Annex 2 of the NPPF are considered to be in affordable housing need. This includes a number of tenures comprising social rent, other affordable housing for rent, discounted market sales housing (at least 20% below market value) and other affordable routes to home ownership (shared ownership, equity loans, low-cost homes for sale, First Homes and rent to buy).
- 4.7 Homes England are clear that policy compliant homes are not eligible for grant provision and that grant funding through the affordable housing programme is only available to support additionality in terms of the delivery of affordable housing.
- 4.8 The NPPG states that where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, refunded to government or specified authority.
- 4.9 The Local Plan Affordable Housing Policy SP19 requires the starting expectation for affordable housing to be provided on-site. On development sites of 10 dwellings or more (or 0.5ha or more) 30% provision on previously developed land and 40% on greenfield land; or for sites in designated rural areas between 5 and 9 dwellings 20% provision. It also states the Council will expect First Homes and other forms of affordable home ownership dwellings to remain affordable in perpetuity so as to meet the needs of both current and future occupiers.
- 4.10 The policy states that the starting point is for the Council to seek a tenure split of affordable housing on each development site of 70% social rented and 30% affordable home ownership. The Housing Need Assessment concluded that the core requirement is for social rented housing, however recognised that there was still a significant proportion of existing and newly arising households that require access to some form of affordable home ownership including shared ownership, discounted market sale and First Homes.
- 4.11 The Councils approach to delivery of affordable housing has been primarily by way of securing delivery through S106 agreements on the grant of residential planning permissions. The operational target in recent years has been to achieve 150 completions of affordable housing units per annum. This performance is based on property hand over data from Registered Provider (RP) information which units are completed any advertised for letting through the Council's Home Choice website or Shared Ownership units are advertised for sale.
- 4.12 The Affordable Housing Sector has faced challenges in recent years which has resulted in many home builders finding it increasingly difficult to fulfil their S106 affordable housing requirements due to a lack of bids from RP's. This has become particularly apparent in West Berkshire over the past 12-18 months whereby numerous approved development schemes have requested variations to the S106 agreements to address these challenges.
- 4.13 This issue is not unique to West Berkshire, in 2024 Savills reported that 53% of housing associations no longer intend to acquire S106 homes or were reducing their requirements, financial capacity had impacted appetite for S106 homes, and this would remain for the next 2-5 years or longer. It is hoped that the pending changes to the

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

grant regime and other Government initiatives promoted in the recent spending review will improve this position and provide greater certainty.

4.14 A number of requests for variations to S106 agreements have been received by the Council in the past year due to the difficulties which developers and RPs are being faced with. As a result, developers who planned to deliver affordable housing as part of a S106 agreement have either been unable to secure an RP and have therefore sought to amend the S106 to either alter the provision or enable greater flexibility within the S106 agreement.

4.15 Key issues that have arisen in West Berkshire include:

- Registered Providers focusing their financial resources to focus on improving and retrofitting their existing stock to meet Decent Homes Standards, energy efficiency targets and regulatory requirements to invest in their stock.
- Registered Providers are prioritising delivery away from s106 schemes to land-led grant funded development, where they can have greater influence over design and the type of homes built.
- Viability issues are presenting a significant barrier to providers progressing schemes due to increased construction costs, material shortages and rising labour costs have all detrimentally impacted the viability of new build schemes.
- Registered Providers not willing to invest in schemes that do not deliver significant scale. The main provider in the district is Sovereign Network Group (SNG) and they have adopted a minimum provision of c40 units while other key strategic partners are only considering schemes of >30 units due to viability issues.
- Registered providers unable to agree to the specification of units with developers and refusing to purchase as RPs seek to future proof their acquisitions in anticipation of building regulation changes meaning they are only looking for s106 properties that exceed current standards. This recently occurred at the David Wilson developed scheme in Speen where the planning permission was secured several years earlier and did not require some of the sustainable design and construction methods (such as heat pumps) that RPs now require. It also remains an issue on the final phase at the Racecourse site.
- Registered providers unwilling to secure S106 affordable housing unless a Designated Protected Area (DPA) waiver is agreed for schemes in rural areas to allow shared ownership units to be staircased up to 100%
- Developers requiring more flexible S106 clauses with cascade mechanisms to allow for alternatives and avoid the need to vary S106's
- Registered providers requiring flexible S106 clauses to secure above policy Affordable Housing
- Registered providers requesting CIL relief (social housing) on schemes that are 100% affordable housing (CIL relief is normally only available on policy amount 30,40 or 20%)

4.16 During recent discussions Homes England have indicated that amongst the amendments to their new delivery models following the recent Spending Review announcements will be a focus on making the programme more accessible, more flexible, and reducing barriers to entry to programmes for RPs of all sizes and local authorities.

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

4.17 Officers have explored the establishment of a Housing Company in recent years. In 2020/21 a feasibility study was undertaken to assess whether the Council should set up a Housing Company to purchase homes for market rent and social rent purposes. A decision was taken not to proceed with this model due to the rising property costs, high cost of establishing the Housing Company increased borrowing costs and overall low rate of return to investment.

4.18 In a report to members in December 2024, Members agreed that pursuing this course of action was not recommended. Since this time there are further examples of local authority Housing Company schemes being wound up due to rising costs and viability including Reading Borough Council in July 2024 (<https://media.reading.gov.uk/news/homes-for-reading-to-close>) and Norwich City Council in July 2025 ([Millions lost by Norwich City Council housing firm 'shameful' - BBC News](#)).

Proposals

There are options and opportunities which can be explored further which may impact the delivery of affordable housing in the district.

4.19 Framework Arrangement

There are examples of how framework agreements across a wider geographic region can help facilitate affordable housing delivery. The West of England Combined Authority framework brings partners from the Mayoral Authority, Local Authorities and Registered Providers together, to facilitate the development of affordable housing and other related projects in the region.

Wokingham Council meanwhile have developed a formal Registered Provider Partnership with selected partners on a framework agreement. This model appears to be similar to the preferred partner status which previously operated in WBC.

At the current time the most recent developments in West Berkshire have been delivered by SNG, Abri, SOHA and Aster. Developing a framework across a wider geographic area could be an initial opportunity through the emerging Berkshire Prosperity Board for a Berkshire wide strategic partnership could encourage greater engagement from RP partners. The added benefit is that RP partners seek to broaden their operational areas and expanded their portfolios.

A Berkshire wide Prosperity Board has been established and one of the key deliverables is the AH workstream which has the following ambition:

- Developing strategic partnerships with key stakeholders including Homes England, MPs, Registered Providers, and the Health Sector.
- Aligning housing initiatives with the Berkshire Prosperity Board's broader objectives.
- Ensuring a consistent and evidence-based approach to specialist housing needs

In addition, there are potential opportunities through the emerging Local Government Reorganisation to develop partnerships across the Ridgeway and Oxford & Shires area, should the "Two Unitaries" proposal be accepted by government next year.

4.20 Variation to s106 Agreement

Requests to negotiate or vary s106 agreements are becoming more and more regular as developers and RPs struggle to deliver viable s106 schemes. It is recognised that there is a need for flexibility to address the lack of demand for S106 housing having a bigger and more protracted impact upon new home delivery.

The most appropriate way to do this is through immediate short-term flexibility through the planning system and S106 agreements, with close monitoring of the situation. This may result in a reduced range of affordable housing tenures being delivered, particularly social and affordable rent but will allow continuation of new housing to occur. Any approaches introduced now must be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain applicable to the current context to keep impacts to a minimum.

To date decisions have been made on a case-by-case basis.

Options that could be employed by the Council to address the issues including.

- A more collaborative approach with developers and RP's, more as partners with greater input at design and planning stages – raise the conversations at pre-application and planning application stages.
- Flexibility over drafting of s106 agreements that can facilitate ultimate delivery of 100% affordable housing schemes. Frequently developers are negotiating “traditional” policy compliant s106 agreements which have flexibility built into them in the event that the site is disposed of to an RP who subsequently seeks to develop a site to provide 100% Affordable Housing (e.g. Abri led scheme at Pound Street Newbury and Station Road Hungerford for example)
- Greater flexibility to allow occupation of private homes even if affordable housing is not yet sold and including cascade mechanisms within S106 agreements so that other tenures/mixes can be delivered without need for formal variation
- Variation of S106 to provide alternative tenure – to consider each application on its merits. Applications to modify the S106 should be accompanied by a robust case with evidence of the issues, details the RP's approached, evidence of responses from the RP's and evidence that the Homes England Clearing Service has been used. Where alternative “non-traditional” affordable housing provision is assessed, there is a risk that a reduced amount of social rented provision contrary to planning policy may be secured. This risk can only be accepted where it appears that the only alternative option is nil affordable housing or accepting a commuted sum for a scheme.
- Requests for a DPA Waiver - to consider each application on its merits having regard to the guidance from Homes England. The risk associated with this option is that where owners of shared ownership properties stair-case up to 100% the RP is under no obligation to buy back the property or deliver replacement housing within West Berkshire resulting in a net loss.

4.21 Commuted Sums

Traditionally the Council's position has been to retain on site delivery of affordable housing units and have been justifiably proud of this position and the success in previous years of securing this position. As a result, commuted sums have not been routinely sought.

One option is for the Council could change this stance and to accept more commuted sums. This would require Members to be open to allowing certain schemes to not deliver on site affordable housing with the acceptance that delivery of affordable would be a longer term investment on specific identified strategic sites in the district.

These funds could then be utilised to incentivise key partners to deliver homes around supporting their bids for s106 schemes with additionality alongside the affordable homes programme grant funding. The availability of a sizeable commuted sums pot may enable increased levels of social rented homes being able to be secured on schemes thereby making them viable for delivery.

4.22 WBC Purchase s106 schemes

The Council could opt to intervene on schemes where developers are unable to source a willing RP partner. An option would be for the Council to negotiate to acquire these units to add to its existing management portfolio through the use of existing s106 funds or future commuted sums (see 5.20).

Risks associated with this approach are that there are limited s106 funds available and there are already projects which may rely on these funds being available to minimise capital pressure on the Council.

At the current time the Council owns 99 dwellings (including Walnut Close). If this volume increases to over 199 homes then the Council would be required to establish a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as Councils that own and manage more than 200 social housing units are legally required to maintain an HRA under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The HRA is a ring-fenced account separate from the General Fund, meaning money raised from tenants (e.g., rent, service charges) must be spent solely on housing services. Operating an HRA requires strategic decisions about maintaining, upgrading, or redeveloping housing stock and would require significant additional costs and governance reporting.

As a result this position needs to be continuously monitored at the current time in order to minimise risks associated with stock ownership.

4.23 Petition Government

There is an opportunity work with the local MP who is on the Select Committee with an opportunity to influence Government policy. The Council recently met with Lee Dillon MP to discuss opportunities and from this arose a commitment to request a meeting with the Housing Minister at which we could secure the opportunity to pilot some proposed solutions. Key elements of the discussion included.

It was noted that the 10-year rent settlement has now been agreed and so Registered Social Landlords are now rewriting Business plans to reflect increased visibility of funding,

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

however there are more fundamental issues that we need to address by working with government to drive provision in the area.

New requirements for sustainable energy capacity in properties have proved a further challenge to secure providers due to increased costs and timings. There is potential to mitigate this by negotiating support for incentivisation payments to landlords to fund retrofitting activity. This could potentially come from the earmarked MHCLG budget to enable affordable housing on blocked sites, and this was discussed with the MP as a subject to be raised with the Minister.

Officers agreed to draft a letter for Lee Dillon MP to send to Sovereign, as leading provider in the area, challenging the lack of new sites in West Berkshire, as Sovereign are committed to existing stock but not developing their presence in the area.

It was also agreed to draft a paper for the MP to raise with the minister including the above matters and additionally:

Viability arguments and the planning system – schemes go forward to Planning without affordable housing on the viability argument, however the bar of 18-20% effectively precludes affordable housing as developers hold out for more favourable deals. The draft will propose a system change to review acceptable profits from development. Lee Dillon advised that the Select Committee are undertaking a review of land value capture however the best way to deliver affordable housing is through grant.

Regarding grant for provision of affordable housing, it was agreed to raise the matter of Homes England funding for affordable housing being limited to additionality on policy compliant schemes and councils being unable to include 100% affordable housing in s106 agreements. West Berkshire Council has had conversations with other councils on this matter and found the guidance and direct advice from Homes England to be unclear and at times inconsistent.

Application of affordable housing policy to alternative housing provision, such as older persons, special needs accommodation through to adulthood and care homes, was discussed. While there is apparently a scheme for older persons' housing through McCarthy and Stone, it was agreed to widen the debate in the draft to include all the above groups.

5 Other options considered

- 5.1 The purpose of this report is to explore and determine which are the most appropriate options for the Council to continue to maximise the delivery of affordable housing in the district.
- 5.2 Establishing a Council owned Housing Company has been considered previously as not being viable at the time. Given recent developments surrounding other local authority owned housing companies as set out in 4.18 this option is not being considered for further exploration.
- 5.3 Do nothing is an option which is open to the Council as the current Policy provision continues to deliver affordable housing units at a scale as set out in 4.5. There is a risk that by doing nothing officer resources will continue to be required in negotiating variable terms as the industry is evolving and striving to find ways to continue to deliver affordable housing.

Options for improving Affordable Housing delivery

- 5.4 By “doing nothing” it may also lead the Council open to challenge when determining requests from RP’s or developers. Outlining the approach to requests assists with providing clarity to RP’s and developers and to manage the risks appropriately.
- 5.5 As a result, “do nothing” is not believed to be an appropriate response.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The current affordable housing market is facing significant pressures nationally due the financial circumstances of affordable housing providers and as such an agreed change in approach by the Council is necessary to manage the risks associated with this.
- 6.2 In the short term it is necessary to ensure that affordable housing of any tenure is delivered to address the needs of the district. Without a flexible approach to S106 housing there is more likelihood that development could stall, be delayed or developers may seek to demonstrate a scheme is not viable to deliver affordable housing.
- 6.3 This would reduce the amount of affordable housing available in the district and impact negatively upon people and families, increase risks of homelessness, longer waits on housing register and additional cost to the council in terms of temporary housing.
- 6.4 The recommendations ensure that the Council can continue to facilitate delivery of affordable housing, manage and influence the tenure of affordable housing and minimise long term risks. The recommendations present an appropriate way to manage the process.

7 Appendices

None

Officer details:

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Agenda Item 8

Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee
25 November 2025

Item 8 – Appointment of Task and Finish Groups

Verbal Item

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Agenda Item 9

Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee
25 November 2025

Item 9 –Task and Finish Group Updates

Verbal Item

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

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

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

4. Key decisions are those executive decisions which are likely to result in spending or savings which are "significant" in relation to the budget for the service or function in question, or in terms of the effect on communities living or working in two or more wards or electoral divisions. All contracts above £500,000 require a key decision in accordance with the Constitution.
5. The Regulations and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in this document in accordance with General Exception and Special Urgency provisions.
6. The Forward Plan will also contain details of intended review activity by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and its Sub-Committee(s) or another body e.g. Task Group associated with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
7. Copies of the Council's Constitution and agenda and minutes for all meetings of the Council may be accessed on the Council's website.
8. For copies of reports or other documents, and for detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Executive, individual Member or officer please contact the named Lead Officer for the item concerned.
9. For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please email executivecycle@westberkshire.gov.uk or by writing to the address below.

Publication Date: 1 September 2025

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

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
25 Sep 2025	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Elizabeth Griffiths	Open
25 Sep 2025	ASC Annual Report		No	Executive			Melanie O'Rourke	Open
25 Sep 2025	Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development	To approve the inclusion of a 3G pitch at Faraday Rd in the Council's Capital Programme.	Yes	Executive	No statutory consultation needed. Discussion has taken place with football groups and will be subject to the recommendations in the Playing Pitch Strategy refresh.		Jon Winstanley	Open
25 Sep 2025	Section 20 Payment Policy	To introduce a Section 20 Parental Contribution Procedure	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open
25 Sep 2025	Capital	To present the	Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open

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	Financial Performance Report Q1 2025/26	Q1 capital financial performance for Members to note.						
25 Sep 2025	Contracts for Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive	To gain approval from Executive to delegate authority to an individual (Service Lead or Service Director) to proceed with contract awards with a value in excess of £2.5M	Yes	Executive			Sarah Wood	Open
25 Sep 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
25 Sep 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q1		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
24 Oct 2025	Winter Service Plan 2025/26	To approve the Winter Service Plan 2025/26	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment	Consultation with Ward Members,		Andrew Reynolds	Open

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				and Highways	Town/ Parish Councils and consideration of comments received, including comments from members of the public during the previous winter service season.			
6 Nov 2025	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)	To share proposed measures set out in the Council's emerging Rights of Way Improvement Plan with decision makers and request approval to publish.	Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
6 Nov 2025	Quarterly Financial Performance	To report on the financial performance of	No	Executive			Toby Bradley	Open

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	Report - Q2 of 2025/26	the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.						
6 Nov 2025	Update on the PPP shared service contract	To fulfil the requirement of the IAA which is due to expire in January 2027, which requires the partner authorities to review the current arrangements and adopt any changes 2 years before the current arrangement expires.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
6 Nov 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
6 Nov 2025	Children's Services Ofsted Outcome		No	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open

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	Report							
12 Nov 2025	North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025 - 2030	To seek approval for adoption of the new North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030 for this National Landscape legally referred to as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Yes	Executive			Rachael Lancaster	Open
12 Nov 2025	Ridgeway Council Formal Proposal		Yes	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open
4 Dec 2025	Speed Limit Review 2024 – Objections	To summarise the responses to the four statutory consultations of the proposed speed limit	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways			Heather Young	Open

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		changes and to make recommendations as to how to proceed in light of the comments received.						
18 Dec 2025	Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task Group Recommendations		No	Executive			Steven Bow	Open
18 Dec 2025	Finance, Property and Procurement resource allocation		No	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Fully exempt Information relating to any individual.
18 Dec 2025	The Enforcement Plan		Yes	Executive			Laura Callan	Open
18 Dec 2025	Financial Improvement Plan and draft		Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open

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	MTFS							
18 Dec 2025	Annual Report of the Shared Building Control Service	To provide and update on the performance of the shared building control service.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
18 Dec 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q2		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
18 Dec 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
18 Dec 2025	Devolution Update		Yes	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open
18 Dec 2025	Youth Council		No	Executive			Gordon Oliver	Open
18 Dec 2025	Sports Hub T & F Group response		No	Executive			Clare Lawrence	Open
20 Jan 2026	Schools Funding Formula 2026/27		Yes	Portfolio Holder: Deputy Leader,			Lisa Potts	Open

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				Children and Family Services				
12 Feb 2026	Independent Lives at Home Procurement		Yes	Executive			Nigel Harvey-Whitten	Fully exempt Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
12 Feb 2026	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2026-27		Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open
12 Feb 2026	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27		Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open
12 Feb 2026	Revenue		Yes	Executive			Elizabeth	Open

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	Budget 2026/27						Griffiths	
12 Feb 2026	Quarterly Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Toby Bradley	Open
12 Feb 2026	Integrated Healthy Lifestyle Service	To approve West Berkshire Public Health's intention to jointly procure an Integrated Healthy Lifestyle Service with Reading Borough Council	Yes	Executive			Jessica Ryall-Spoor	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
12 Feb 2026	Capital Budget 2026/27		Yes	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open
12 Feb 2026	Henwick Worthy		Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open

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	Masterplan							
12 Feb 2026	Contract Award – Older Peoples Block Beds		Yes	Executive			Thomas Bailey	Open
19 Mar 2026	Playing Pitch Strategy		Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open

Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Item	Scrutiny Theme	Purpose	Lead Officer	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member	Pre or post decision?
10 February 2026 (Budget Scrutiny)					
Medium Term Financial Strategy	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To set out the financial planning assumptions for future years and how these align these with the Council Strategy to ensure that the Council Strategy will be delivered. The MTFs highlights the overarching key issues facing the Council's finances as well as how there are many different scenarios and uncertainty concerning the future revenue streams for the Council in the future.	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2025/26	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To consolidate the investments and borrowing strategy for the year ahead by detailing how and where the Council will invest and borrow in the forthcoming year, within a particular framework. This strategy is monitored throughout the year, with a mid-year report going to the Government and Ethics Committee as well as an annual report being presented to Members.	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Capital Strategy. Financial Years 2025/26 to 2034/35	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To outline the Capital Strategy covering financial years 2025/26 to 2034/35 and the supporting funding framework, providing a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Revenue Budget 2025/26	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To review the budget proposals for the year ahead that form the basis of the 2024-25 revenue budget and detail the respective Council Tax proposals and resolutions.	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Revenue Performance Report Q3 2023/24	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets.	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Capital Financing Performance Report Q3 2023/24	<i>Corporate Effectiveness</i>	Reports on the under or over spends against the Council's approved capital budget.	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Cllr Iain Cottingham (Finance and Resources)	Pre-decision
Review of Transformation Programme			Gabrielle Mancini	Cllr Vicky Poole (Transformation and Corporate Programme)	

17 March 2026						
	Pedestrianisation					
	Waste Strategy					
To Be Programmed						
	Thames Water and The Environment Agency	<i>Partnership Effectiveness</i>	To understand how Thames Water is investing in its networks to support planned development and manage pollution incidents in West Berkshire and how the Environment Agency is holding the water company to account.	TBC	N/A	Scrutiny Committee Decision
	Playing Pitch Strategy					

Council Strategy Priorities

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

Scrutiny Themes

- Policy Effectiveness
- Corporate Effectiveness
- Partnership Effectiveness

Last updated:

07 September 2025