

Notice of Meeting



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Extraordinary Executive

Thursday 11 June 2026 at 6.00 pm

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

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

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 3 June 2026

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

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



Agenda - Executive to be held on Thursday 11 June 2026 (continued)

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

Part I

- | | Pages |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any). | 5 - 6 |
| 2. Declarations of Interest
To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct . | 7 - 8 |

Items as timetabled in the Forward Plan

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| 3. Contract Award for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract
Purpose: to seek Executive approval to award the Highways Term Maintenance Contract covering the period from 01 October 2026 for an initial period of seven years to 30 September 2033, with the option to agree a further three-year extension period until 30 September 2036. | 9 - 14 |
| 4. West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement
Purpose: to seek authorisation from the Executive to commence preparation of a new West Berkshire Local Plan (WBLP) and publish the Notice of Intention to Commence by 30 June 2026. Also, to approve a proposed timetable for preparing the Plan, and to provide delegated authority for the Service Director for Development and Housing in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, to approve and publish updates to the timetable as may be necessary. The report also asks the Executive to support the establishment of an advisory cross-party member Local Plan Working Group to support preparation of the Plan. | 15 - 32 |
| 5. Planning Enforcement Plan
Purpose: to approve the recommended changes following public consultation and adopt the West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan 2026. | 33 - 76 |
| 6. New Procurement Strategy and "Think Local" Social Value Strategy
Purpose: to introduce a new Procurement Strategy and 'Think Local' Social Value Strategy that will improve procurement and commissioning | 77 - 128 |



Agenda - Executive to be held on Thursday 11 June 2026 (continued)

across West Berkshire with greater market engagement to encourage small and medium sized enterprises and the voluntary sector to work with the Council.

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7. **All Age Autism Strategy 2026-2029** 129 - 216
Purpose: to seek approval to publish the All-Age Autism Strategy, a key document that outlines the council's commitment to ensuring that people living with autism in the district can lead rewarding and fulfilling lives, and that they, their families, and their carers receive the support they need.
-
8. **Asset Optimisation Plan** 217 - 232
Purpose: to seek approval for the adoption and implementation of the Assets Optimisation Plan, which forms a key component of the Council's Finance Improvement Plan agreed in December 2025 and supports the Council's financial recovery and long-term sustainability.
-
9. **Exclusion of Press and Public**
RECOMMENDATION: That members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information of the description contained in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 specified in brackets in the heading of each item. [Section 10 of Part 10 of the Constitution refers.](#)
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Part II

10. **Contract Award for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract** 233 - 258
(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person)
(Paragraph 5 – information relating to legal privilege)
- Purpose: to seek Executive approval to award the Highways Term Maintenance Contract covering the period from 01 October 2026 for an initial period of seven years to 30 September 2033, with the option to agree a further three-year extension period until 30 September 2036.

Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Executive Director: -Resources

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



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Executive – 11 June 2026

Item 1 – Apologies for absence

Verbal Item

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Executive – 11 June 2026

Item 2 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Contract Award for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract – Part I

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	11 June 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	22 May 2026
Report Author:	Sarah Wood / Jon Winstanley

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Executive approval to award the Highways Term Maintenance Contract covering the period from 01 October 2026 for an initial period of seven years to 30 September 2033, with the option to agree a further three-year extension period until 30 September 2036.
- 1.2 The procurement route used to procure this contract was the Competitive Flexible Procedure in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 legislation.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Executive resolves to:
 - (1) award the contract for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract for the initial period covering 01 October 2026 to 30 September 2033 (with a three-year extension clause) to the successful bidder.
 - (2) delegate authority to the Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services in consultation with the Executive Director (Place) to:
 - (a) finalise the terms of the agreement as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments (such amendment shall not be substantial or material) to the terms of the agreement necessary to produce a final agreement for execution and to enter into that agreement; and
 - (b) finalise and enter into an appropriate lease agreement required for the contractor's use of the Chieveley depot.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Funding directed through the term contract is received from a variety of sources, including Community Infrastructure Levy, Council borrowing and Section 106 contributions, although the main source of funding is Department for Transport grant. Based on previous years, average annual spend through the contract is approximately £15 million. While there is no contractual minimum spend, this contract is vital to ensuring the Council can fulfil its duties under the Highways Act 1980 to keep road users safe.
Human Resource:	TUPE does apply to this contract and provisions are included within the contract for staff to be transferred from the old contract to the new. Advice has been provided by HR to support in answering supplier clarifications.
Legal:	This project has primarily been led by external consultants, who have taken the lead on matters relating to the NEC4 contract, with only limited involvement from our Legal team. The West Berkshire legal team’s involvement has been at key points in the process to advise on legal procurement issues alongside the procurement team. The Legal team can confirm that this procurement exercise is compliant with both the Council constitution and the Procurement Act 2023.
Risk Management:	Risks have been managed in accordance with the Council’s risk management policy.
Property:	The successful contractor will enter a lease for the use of Chieveley Depot which is essential to enable the activities within the contract to be completed.
Policy:	This contract is essential to help the Council discharge its duties under the Highways Act and aligns with the Council Strategy Priorities of Services we are proud of, and A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire.

Contract Award for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract – Part I

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:		X		
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				
Environmental Impact:	X			The Council's net zero goals have been considered within the procurement exercise.
Health Impact:		X		
ICT Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			This aligns with the Council Strategy Priorities of Services we are proud of, and A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire.
Core Business:	X			The contract will provide efficiencies in the delivery of the Council's core highway services over the life of the contract.

Data Impact:		x		
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report seeks approval from Executive to award a ten-year contract for the provision of a Highways Term Maintenance Contract in West Berkshire following a competitive procurement procedure. The resulting contract will cover the period from 01 October 2026 to 30 September 2033 with an option to extend for a further three years thereafter.
- 4.2 The aggregated value of this contract requires that it be advertised in full accordance with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023.
- 4.3 The council chose to carry out a two-stage Competitive Flexible Procedure. The preferred option for procurement was approved by Procurement Board on 20 August 2025.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The current Highways Term Maintenance Contract with the incumbent contractor comes to an end on 30 September 2026 with no further extensions available.
- 5.2 A procurement process has been undertaken to procure a new supplier to deliver this contract from 01 October 2026 for a maximum period of ten years. Sufficient value and flexibility has been built into the new contract to accommodate changes that may occur due to the Local Government Reorganisation.
- 5.3 This report seeks Executive approval to award the Highways Term Maintenance Contract to the highest scoring bidder following the procurement process.

Background

- 5.4 The Council spends over £15m on highway maintenance activities, including reactive and planned services, winter maintenance and broader estates asset management each year. A significant Capital programme is also associated with the Highways Contract and delivers highway improvement schemes, safety schemes and active travel programmes annually.
- 5.5 The Council's current Highways Term Maintenance Contract ends on 30th September 2026. The contract does not facilitate any further extensions to the contract, and therefore a procurement process began to retender the contract in 2025.
- 5.6 Similarly to the current contract, following market engagement with suppliers, the Council intends to enter into a new Contract for an initial term of seven years with the option to extend by three years for a total term of ten years.

Proposals

- 5.7 This procurement was conducted under the Procurement Act 2023 using a Competitive Flexible Procedure. A UK2 Preliminary Market Engagement Notice (16 June 2025) invited suppliers to an online workshop (27 June 2025), attended by 14 suppliers, followed by one-to-one sessions with eight suppliers covering commercial models, innovation, and delivery approaches.
- 5.8 A UK4 Tender Notice (3 November 2025) set out a two-stage process: Stage 1 (selection) and Stage 2 (initial tenders, negotiations, and final tenders). Stage 1 closed on 12 December 2025, with eight compliant bids; the top five progressed.
- 5.9 Stage 2 was issued on 15 January 2026, requiring initial quality responses and pricing. Bidders also submitted up to five Efficiency and Innovation Cards (EICs) aligned to key priority areas. Stage 2 closed on 6 March 2026, with five bidders submitting.
- 5.10 A cross party steering group was set up to assist with the assessment of the efficiency and innovations cards. Important feedback on the proposed innovations was received from the group and fed back to the tenderers at the face to face clarification sessions.
- 5.10 Clarification meetings were held to refine proposals and agree EICs for final submission. Following market concerns about pricing volatility, a mitigation approach using BCIS PAFI indexation was introduced.
- 5.11 The request for Final Tenders was issued on 2 April 2026 with a final submission date of 24 April 2026. All five bidders submitted compliant bids, which were evaluated by a panel including Finance and Environment representatives. The evaluation criteria was based on 50% Quality, 10% Social Value and 40% Price.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Permission to go out to tender was sought from Procurement Board. The procurement options were set out in the procurement strategy.
- 6.2 The single supplier term maintenance contract, procured via the Competitive Flexible Procedure, was the preferred option, supported by recent Berkshire and regional appraisals. The scale and complexity of the service favour a single, experienced provider with the resilience and resources typically found in national or regional suppliers.
- 6.6 Opportunities for SMEs remain through subcontracting, social value initiatives, and local workforce delivery. The specification reflects West Berkshire's refreshed standards and asset management objectives, adopting an outcome-focused approach to drive performance, innovation, and continuous improvement, supported by a commercial model that incentivises collaboration and measurable social value.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Executive resolves to:

Contract Award for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract – Part I

(1) award the Highways Term Maintenance Contract to the successful bidder for the initial period covering 01 October 2026 to 30 September 2033 (with a three-year extension clause).

(2) delegate authority to the Service Lead Legal & Democratic Services in consultation with the Executive Director (Place) to:

(a) finalise the terms of the agreement as set out in the tender documents and to make any necessary drafting or other amendments (such amendment shall not be substantial or material) to the terms of the agreement necessary to produce a final agreement for execution and to enter into that agreement; and

(b) finalise and enter into an appropriate lease agreement required for the contractor's use of the Chieveley depot.

8 Appendices

8.1 None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

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

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position:

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Officer details:

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Job Title: Service Director – Environment
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West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	11 June 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Denise Gaines
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	20 May 2026
Report Author:	Paula Amorelli

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks authorisation from the Executive to commence preparation of a new West Berkshire Local Plan (WBLP) and publish the Notice of Intention to Commence by 30 June 2026. Also, to approve a proposed timetable for preparing the Plan, and to provide delegated authority for the Service Director for Development and Housing in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, to approve and publish updates to the timetable as may be necessary. The report also asks the Executive to support the establishment of an advisory cross-party member Local Plan Working Group to support preparation of the Plan.

2 Recommendations

1. To endorse the establishment of an advisory cross-party member Local Plan Working Group which will be utilised to inform the preparation and approach to the Local Plan with full terms of reference to be established and agreed by the Working Group.
2. That approval is given to publish the West Berkshire Local Plan timetable in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
3. That approval is given to publish the Council's formal Notice of Intention to Commence the West Berkshire Local Plan on or before 30 June 2026 in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
4. That authority is delegated to the Service Director for Development and Housing, in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to:
 - I. Approve and publish updates to the timetable as may be necessary.
 - II. Prepare and undertake a scoping consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

- III. Approve, publish and submit the required documents and statements for statutory Gateway 1.
- IV. Approve evidence documents, reports and supporting data and analysis for publication.
- V. After having regard to the advice of the Local Plan Working Group, to prepare and consult on the proposed Local Plan content and evidence prior to Gateway 2.
- VI. Approve, publish and submit the required documents and statements for statutory Gateway 2.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>The preparation of a new Local Plan will have ongoing revenue implications over the plan preparation period, including staff resources, technical evidence, specialist consultancy and examination costs. These costs will be managed through existing budgets and future budget setting processes. While some work can be undertaken in-house, a significant proportion will require specialist external advice and software. It is anticipated that most of the evidence base costs will fall in 2026/27 and 2027/28, alongside work associated with Gateway 2, with further costs arising in 2028/29 in relation to Gateway 3 and the Examination in Public.</p> <p>In conjunction with the Council’s Project Support Team, robust project governance arrangements are being developed to ensure that the programme is properly managed and that the necessary resources can be secured.</p> <p>In March 2026, the Council was awarded approximately £108,000 under the government’s Local Plan Implementation Funding which will support initial costs. Funding was conditional on the Authority publishing a Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation by 30 June 2026; and publishing its Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026.</p> <p>Failure to progress plan-making in accordance with statutory requirements may result in financial risk through government intervention.</p> <p>It is estimated that the cost of preparing a Local Plan through to adoption is now in the region of £2million (not including officer time). By comparison, the approximate cost of the Local Plan Review (LPR) was £1.5million. The financial implications of not having an up to date adopted Local Plan in place could</p>

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

	<p>exceed this if the Council is required to defend planning appeals which can cost in the region of £250-£300k per major appeal.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>The work will be led by the Planning Policy Team, comprising approximately 4.2 FTE professional officers, alongside associated management support.</p> <p>Given the Government’s timetable to prepare the Plan within a shorter timeframe than previously, and other necessary workstreams, additional resources may be required within the team.</p> <p>Resources will also be required from across the Council as part of its preparation including ICT, Environment Delivery, Emergency Planning, Highways, Education, Legal, Infrastructure, Ecology, Public Health, Housing, Countryside, Development Management, Communications, Consultation and Engagement. Preparation of the evidence base and representation at the Examination Hearings will require support from specialist consultants as well as legal representation including Counsel.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>Local Plan preparation is a statutory function. This report addresses the Council’s legal duty to commence plan-making within the timescales set out in national policy and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.</p> <p>The recommendations in this report relate primarily to procedural steps required to commence and progress plan-making in accordance with the 2026 Regulations. They do not determine the substantive content of the WBLP, which will remain subject to future consultation and the Council’s formal decision-making processes.</p> <p>While the Council’s constitution already provides the broad framework for decision-making and delegation, this report clarifies how those existing arrangements will apply to the timely preparation of the WBLP, including the exercise of delegation by the Service Director for Development and Housing in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing at key stages.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>The principal risk is failure to comply with government-mandated plan-making timescales, which could</p>

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

	<p>result in intervention by the Secretary of State. This would result in increased costs for the Council and a loss of local democratic accountability. The proposed delegated arrangements provide flexibility and timeliness to mitigate this risk, in accordance with recommendations in government guidance.</p> <p>Local Plan risks will be assessed and monitored as part of the Project Initiation Document (PID) and other project management structures being put in place in consultation with the Capital Transformation Team.</p>
<p>Property:</p>	<p>There are no direct property implications arising from this report.</p>
<p>Policy:</p>	<p>The report relates directly to the Council’s statutory planning function to prepare a Local Plan. It also relates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.</p> <p>According to the NPPF, “the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for meeting housing needs and addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.”</p> <p>Keeping the Local Plan is up-to-date is crucial to ensuring it carries full statutory weight in planning decisions, and to maximising local influence in how development needs are delivered.</p>

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

	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		<p>The proposed decision relates solely to the commencement of the statutory Local Plan process and the delegation of authority to undertake procedural and preparatory actions.</p> <p>The decision does not determine planning policy content, site allocations or development proposals, and does not change how services are accessed or delivered.</p> <p>No adverse impact on individuals or groups with protected characteristics has been identified at this stage.</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken where required as part of subsequent plan preparation and consultation stages.</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment is therefore not required at this stage.</p>

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

<p>B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?</p>		X		<p>The proposed decision relates solely to the commencement of the statutory Local Plan process and the delegation of authority to undertake procedural and preparatory actions.</p> <p>The decision does not determine planning policy content, site allocations or development proposals, and does not change how services are accessed or delivered.</p> <p>No adverse impact on individuals or groups with protected characteristics has been identified at this stage.</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken where required as part of subsequent plan preparation and consultation stages.</p> <p>An Equalities Impact Assessment is therefore not required at this stage.</p>
<p>Environmental Impact:</p>		X		<p>The proposal relates to procedural steps to commence plan-making. Environmental impacts will be assessed in detail through the Local Plan process, including Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment where required.</p>
<p>Health Impact:</p>		X		<p>There are no direct health impacts arising from the proposed decision. Health considerations will be addressed through policy development and evidence gathering during plan-making.</p>
<p>ICT Impact:</p>		X		<p>The Local Plan process will continue to be supported through digital engagement and consultation platforms, consistent with current Council practice.</p>
<p>Digital Services Impact:</p>		X		<p>The Local Plan process will continue to be supported through digital engagement and</p>

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

				consultation platforms, consistent with current Council practice.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			<p>The proposal supports the Council’s core statutory planning function and enables long-term strategic planning to support sustainable growth, housing delivery and infrastructure provision</p> <p>It contributes to the delivery of a number of the Council’s strategic priorities including Priority 2, A Fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all, through enabling delivery of affordable housing, Priority 3 Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency, through the relevant policies applicable to new development and Priority 4 - a prosperous and resilient West Berkshire through enabling growth in terms of both housing and the economy and specifically 4.D – Ensure that new housing development comes with suitable infrastructure and enhanced amenities.</p>
Core Business:	X			The proposal supports the Council’s core statutory planning function and enables long-term strategic planning to support sustainable growth, housing delivery and infrastructure provision.
Data Impact:		X		<p>No significant data protection issues arise from the proposed decision. A Data Protection Impact Assessment will be undertaken where required for any consultation or data-processing activities during plan preparation.</p> <p>A Data Protection Impact Assessment is therefore not required at this stage.</p>
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Bob Dray, Interim Service Lead – Planning</p> <p>Laura Callan, Interim Service Director – Development and Housing</p> <p>Sharon Armour, Legal Services Manager</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report seeks authority to formally commence preparation of the new West Berkshire Local Plan (WBLP) in accordance with recently introduced national plan-making regulations. This requires the Council to publish the Notice of Intention to Commence by 30 June 2026 and to approve the proposed timetable for its preparation. Delegated authority is requested for the Service Director for Development and Housing, in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to authorise and publish key procedural requirements to enable the Plan to progress in a timely manner. The Executive is asked to endorse the establishment of an advisory cross-party member Local Plan Working Group to support the preparation of the Plan.
- 4.2 Although the [West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041](#) (LPR) was adopted in June 2025, changes to national policy and regulation require the Council to formally begin preparation of its next Local Plan by 31 October 2026.
- 4.3 The proposals in this report:
- Establish a timetable for Local Plan preparation.
 - Authorise publication of a Notice of Intention to Commence plan-making.
 - Enable early scoping consultation and evidence preparation.
 - Support compliance with mandatory gateway assessments and statutory requirements.
- 4.4 Approval of the recommendations will ensure the Council meets its legal duties in a timely manner, avoids the risk of government intervention and maintains a plan-led approach to the management of future development in the District.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.2 This report sets out the statutory and policy context requiring West Berkshire Council to commence preparation of a new Local Plan and seeks delegated authority to enable the necessary preparatory actions to be undertaken efficiently and within mandated timescales.
- 5.3 In doing so, the report also acknowledges the wider context for plan-making, including recent changes to national legislation, ongoing discussions regarding local government reorganisation, and an increased emphasis within national policy on strategic planning across wider geographies. These matters provide important context but do not remove or diminish the Council's current statutory responsibilities as local planning authority.
- 5.4 The Local Plan is a key tool for the Council in delivering its priorities. An effective Local Plan provides consistency and confidence to landowners about development potential in the area, which in turn can support a prosperous and resilient West Berkshire. A

strong policy framework is also essential to ensure that new housing developments come with suitable infrastructure and enhanced amenities.

Background

- 5.5 Under the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(as amended\)](#), the Council is required to produce a local plan for its area. England operates a plan-led system in which national and local planning policy is set out in statutory development plans (which can include local plans and neighbourhood plans). Development plans are expected to be consistent with government policy set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#). Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.6 The new plan-making system is more prescriptive, and the content of new plans will differ from the [West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041](#) (LPR). There will be a stronger focus on vision and outcomes, with policies primarily area-specific and focused on site allocations, rather than thematic development management policies (e.g. conservation). Such thematic policies are now expected to be set at a national level through the NPPF.
- 5.7 The Council adopted the LPR in June 2025, the culmination of 7 years work at a cost of around £1.5 million. It has traditionally been common for there to be a gap of over ten years between the adoption of local plans. However, the [Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) (LURA), introduced the statutory framework for a number of reforms to the planning system, including the introduction of a new, streamlined and accelerated, plan making system.
- 5.8 On 26 March 2026, the government published [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#), which set out how the new plan-making system should be implemented. The Regulations require plans to be prepared within a 30-month period, with progress assessed at three gateway checkpoints. The process is illustrated in the diagram at Appendix A. This timetable is widely recognised as challenging for local planning authorities, particularly given the limited detail currently available on some aspects of implementation, the need for strong project management and robust governance arrangements, and the capacity constraints affecting external consultants required to prepare elements of the evidence base within the necessary timescales. Under transitional arrangements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024), local planning authorities whose adopted plans do not meet at least 80% of their identified housing need are required to commence preparation of a new Local Plan within defined timescales. This includes West Berkshire, because the housing requirement in the LPR (an average of 515 dwellings per year) is less than 80% of the current local housing need (1,057 dwellings per year) which has been increased in line with the new standard method set out in national guidance.
- 5.9 Despite having a recently adopted Local Plan, the Council must formally start preparation of its next Local Plan immediately. This will mean:
- Publication of a Notice of Intention to Commence plan-making by 30 June 2026; and

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

- Formal commencement of the 30-month plan-making period by 31 October 2026.

5.10 The government has also indicated its intention to use intervention powers where local authorities fail to comply with these requirements. This would result in increased costs for the Council and a loss of local democratic accountability.

Wider Planning Context – Spatial Development Strategies and Local Government Reorganisation

5.11 Alongside these regulatory changes, national policy is increasingly focused on strategic planning and collaboration across wider functional geographies. In this context, there is ongoing discussion at national level regarding future local government reorganisation (LGR) and the potential requirement for strategic-level plans such as Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) to be prepared either by combined authorities or by groups of local planning authorities working together. A report is due to be presented to Executive in July setting out the position in relation to West Berkshire.

5.12 West Berkshire forms part of the proposed wider Ridgeway area, where strategic cross-boundary matters may need to be addressed over time. While the detail, geography and governance arrangements for any future strategic planning or reorganisation are not yet confirmed, these considerations form part of the broader planning context within which the Council must continue to discharge its existing statutory functions.

5.13 The government has been clear that local government reorganisation should not delay the preparation of local plans. During the early stages of the process, the Council expects to have clarity on the government's proposals for LGR in the area and will adapt as required. The new Local Plan process requires regular updates to the timetable to enable adjustments to be made when needed.

5.14 Commencing Local Plan preparation now will ensure that the Council has an up-to-date evidence base, a clear policy framework and the flexibility to respond to future changes, including LGR and any requirement to engage in the preparation of a SDS, while continuing to comply with existing statutory plan-making duties.

Proposals

5.15 Under the new plan-making system, authorities are expected to spend time 'getting ready' before starting formal plan preparation. The Council will need to demonstrate the preparatory work it has completed before commencing the 30-month plan-making period. 'Getting ready' involves making progress in five areas:

- Preparing and publishing a Local Plan timetable;
- Establishing project management and governance arrangements;
- Establishing a strategy for consultation and engagement on the Plan;
- Scoping the anticipated content of the Plan; and
- Starting the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

5.16 Before starting the 30-month plan preparation period, the Council must:

- Prepare and publish the first version of its Local Plan timetable in line with data standards;
- Publish its [Notice of Intention to Commence](#) by 30 June 2026, at least four months before it intends to pass through Gateway 1; and
- Invite early engagement from stakeholders by running a scoping consultation, whereby feedback is invited on the matters the plan should contain and how future engagement should be carried out.

Local Plan timetable

5.17 To meet the requirements of the new plan-making system, the Council must prepare, publish and keep up to date a Local Plan timetable in line with regulations and data standards. The first version of the timetable must be published before, or together with, the Notice of Intention to Commence and should show how the Council will prepare and adopt the Plan within a 30-month timeframe.

5.18 Approval is sought to publish the timetable as set out below. The timetable is ambitious, particularly with regard to the capacity within the Planning Policy Team. The timetable will make clear that the WBLP will set out the spatial vision and strategic objectives for the future development of the District of West Berkshire over the Plan period. It will contain policies and site allocations designed/formulated to achieve the vision and a framework for monitoring and implementation. When adopted, it will replace the policies contained in the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041. It will also clarify that the Council does not intend to prepare any supplementary plans at this time.

5.19 As the timetable must be updated monthly from the date it is first published where there are changes to dates, and also at other specified points in the process, this report also seeks delegated authority for the Service Director for Development and Housing, in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, to approve updates to the timetable as required.

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

West Berkshire Local Plan Timetable	
Activity	Date
Notice of intention to commence Local Plan preparation	25 June 2026
Scoping consultation starts	24 July 2026
Scoping consultation ends	04 September 2026
Gateway 1 self-assessment summary made available	30 October 2026
Consultation on proposed Local Plan content and evidence starts	28 May 2027
Consultation on proposed Local Plan content and evidence ends	09 July 2027
Gateway 2	29 October 2027
Consultation on the proposed Local Plan starts	05 June 2028
Consultation on the proposed Local Plan ends	31 July 2028
Gateway 3	15 September 2028
Submission of Plan for examination	27 October 2028
Adoption of the Plan	30 April 2029

Notice of Intention to Commence

5.20 In order to comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and the conditions attached to its recent allocation of Local Plan Implementation Funding, the Council has to issue a formal 'Notice of Intention to Commence' the West Berkshire Local Plan on or before 30 June 2026. The report seeks approval for this notice to be published.

Governance arrangements

5.21 The 30-month timetable for preparation of the new Local Plan is particularly challenging, and West Berkshire Council will be among the first tranche of local planning authorities to follow the new plan-making process. The government recognises that this may require local authorities to review their governance arrangements and put robust approaches in place to manage plan preparation and deliver the programme. A number

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

of matters are mandated at Gateways 1, 2 and 3, and failure to meet these requirements will prevent the Plan from progressing. It is therefore essential that appropriate governance structures are agreed before commencing the formal 30-month process. This will enable timely decision-making and provide clarity for stakeholders about who will make key decisions.

- 5.22 The Constitution's Scheme of Delegation authorises the Service Director for Development and Housing to exercise the functions, duties and powers of the Council as set out in the relevant legislation, including the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, subject to the reservations and exceptions set out therein. Previous Local Plans have been progressed on this basis, with close coordination with members through the Portfolio Holder for Planning, the previous Planning Advisory Group, and with all key decisions being made through the executive cycle. The proposals set out in this report do not seek to deviate from that approach, but explicit clarity is required to achieve the ambitious timetable.
- 5.23 It is important to stress that the recommendations in this report relate primarily to procedural steps required to commence and progress plan-making in accordance with the 2026 Regulations. They do not determine the substantive content of the next Local Plan, which will remain subject to future consultation and the Council's formal decision-making processes. Clarifying and, where appropriate, refining how existing processes and delegations will operate in practice for the preparation of the WBLP will support efficient decision-making. While the Council's constitution already provides a broad framework of delegations, this report does not propose a substantial change in approach; rather, it identifies and specifies the delegations needed to support the timely preparation of the WBLP. It is therefore recommended that delegated authority is exercised by the Service Director for Development and Housing, in consultation with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, at key stages. This is intended to ensure statutory compliance, provide flexibility and responsiveness in progressing plan-making, support early engagement with stakeholders and the Planning Inspectorate, and reduce the risk of delay and intervention.
- 5.24 The recommendations include delegated authority to approve, publish and submit the required documents and statements for statutory Gateway 1 (Recommendation 2.4.III) which comprises of a self-assessment and the publishing of information that demonstrates the Council is ready to move onto the next stage.
- 5.25 The recommended delegation at 2.4.V is to delegate approval to commence consultation on the content and evidence of the WBLP prior to Gateway 2, having regard to the advice of the proposed Local Plan Working Group. This is necessary because, to comply with the 30-month timetable, the scope of that consultation will need to be agreed in April to commence in May 2027. This is similar to the process followed for the 'preferred options' stage of the LPR. Consultation at this stage is expected to cover the proposed vision for the District, and the outcomes the Plan is intended to deliver. Also, the proposed aims and objectives and how these will be achieved, the Council's proposed approach to planning policies, including potential site allocations and a summary of the evidence base and other supporting material. This would be broadly comparable to the 'preferred options' stage undertaken as part of the LPR.
- 5.26 The recommended delegation at 2.5.VI is necessary to enable the submission of documents to the Planning Inspectorate in a timely way. Gateway 2 is where the

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

Council must seek observations and advice from the Planning Inspectorate on aspects of the proposed Plan to support early resolution of potential soundness issues. Following Gateway 2, necessary changes are then made prior to the next round of public consultation. It is not until after Gateway 3 that the Plan is submitted for examination.

Member involvement

- 5.27 Strong member involvement, and effective political oversight throughout the plan-making process is essential. It is common for councils to set up a local plan steering group during plan preparation to facilitate this in alignment with the requirements of the process. During preparation of the LPR, cross-party working was achieved through the Planning Advisory Group, which is no longer in existence. It is therefore proposed that a new focused cross-party Local Plan Working Group (LPWG) is established. Its principal role would be to enable member engagement in the formulation and development of policies and proposals for the West Berkshire Local Plan, to provide a forum for cross-party discussion, and to assist and advise the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing as the Plan progresses. The LPWG would be advisory in nature and would not have any substantive decision-making powers with its make-up, meeting frequency and powers set out in agreed terms of reference.
- 5.28 Given the importance of the Local Plan and the demands of the plan-making process, it is considered essential that this specific LPWG is established, focused on the single objective of preparing a high-quality Local Plan. Past experience has shown that cross-party membership also serves this objective, as it encourages rigorous challenge throughout the process. It is anticipated that the LPWG would need to convene on a more flexible basis than has previously been necessary, in order to align with the plan-making process.
- 5.29 In addition to the formal governance arrangements, Members will have an important role in shaping and informing the Local Plan as it develops. There could be various touchpoints in the Local Plan process that enable participation from a wider group of Members, with the LPWG helping to identify suitable opportunities. These might include:
- Participation in workshops, for example, to help draft the vision and objectives for the Local Plan, or to discuss potential sites for the HELAA.
 - Updates through Member briefings at key milestones, particularly ahead of launching public consultation.
 - Participation in public consultation events.
- 5.30 In-between Gateway 2 and Gateway 3, the proposed submission Local Plan will be presented to full Council for approval to undertake public consultation before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination after passing through Gateway 3. This mirrors the process followed for the LPR at the Regulation 19 stage.

Wider stakeholder engagement

- 5.31 Effective engagement will be essential to the preparation of the new WBLP. Early and ongoing engagement will help to ensure that the Plan is informed by local knowledge,

reflects the issues and opportunities facing different parts of the District, and is prepared in a transparent and inclusive way. Engagement will also support the Council in understanding the views of residents, businesses, infrastructure providers, landowners, developers, town and parish councils, neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders at key stages of the process.

5.32 The Council will prepare a proportionate strategy for consultation and engagement to support plan-making from the outset. This is likely to include a combination of digital consultation, targeted stakeholder discussions, workshops, meetings and other public engagement activity as and when appropriate. The initial scoping consultation will provide an early opportunity for people to comment on the matters the Plan should address and how future engagement should be undertaken. As the Plan progresses, engagement will be aligned with the formal statutory stages of plan preparation and will be supported by Member briefings and other opportunities for Members to help shape the process.

6 Other options considered

6.1 An alternative option would be to take no action at this time and delay preparation of the Local Plan. This is not recommended, as failure to commence plan-making within the required timescales would place the Council in breach of national policy and the conditions of the Local Plan Implementation Funding. It would also expose the Council to intervention by the Secretary of State, increased risks of planning appeals, and long-term failure to meet the development needs of the District.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The recommendations are proposed to ensure that West Berkshire Council complies with new statutory plan-making requirements, maintains control over its planning policy framework, and mitigates the risk of government intervention. Delegated authority will enable timely and effective progression of the Local Plan process.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Local Plan process overview

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

West Berkshire Local Plan timetable and commencement

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

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position:

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

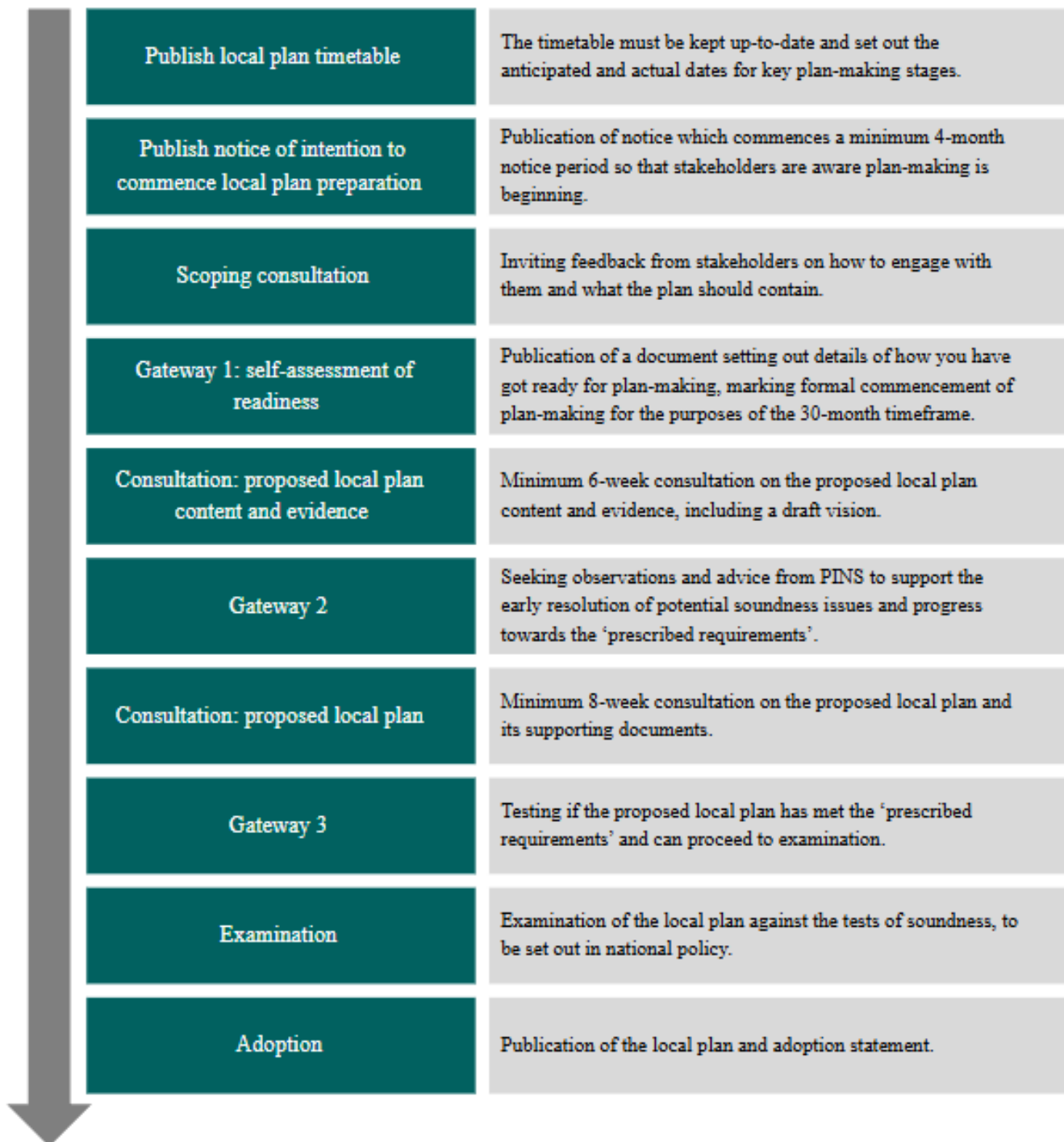
Report is to note only

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

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Local Plan process overview



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Planning Enforcement Plan 2026

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	11 June 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Denise Gaines
Report Author:	Lee Goodall

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Executive to adopt the West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan. The Planning Enforcement Plan is an important document which sets out the objectives and priorities of the planning enforcement service and provides information and guidance for residents, developers and other interested parties, on how complaints about unauthorised development are handled. It identifies priorities for enforcement action which will inform decisions about the investigation process and when enforcement action will be taken.

2 Recommendation

2.1 To approve the recommended changes following public consultation and adopt the West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan 2026.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	No financial implications. The plan is designed to be implemented using existing resources.
Human Resource:	No human resource implications. The plan is designed to be implemented using existing resources.
Legal:	None
Risk Management:	The updated Enforcement Plan alters the priority for investigations and is designed to ensure breaches that have the potential for most impact are prioritised for investigations

	which reduces the risk of harmful and irreversible development occurring.			
Property:	None			
Policy:	The Enforcement Plan is not a statutory requirement, but national planning practice guidance supports the use of such plans.			
	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 update to the Enforcement plan sets out the Councils approach to planning enforcement investigations and would not significantly alter service provision. As such it would have a neutral impact upon inequality.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The updated enforcement plan would not have disproportionate impacts upon the lives of people with protected characteristics.
Environmental Impact:	X			Implementation of the enforcement plan has the potential for positive impacts upon environmental outcomes where it secures high quality development and compliance with policy requirements.

Health Impact:	X			Implementation of the enforcement plan has the potential for positive impacts upon health outcomes where it secures high quality development and compliance with policy requirements.
ICT Impact:		X		Implementation of the enforcement plan will utilise existing digital processes.
Digital Services Impact:		X		Implementation of the enforcement plan will utilise existing digital processes.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The updated enforcement plan aligns with the Council's Priority 1. Services we are proud of. It sets out how decisions will be made and therefore provides transparency of decision making and accountability. The changes ensure operational effectiveness within the parameters of available resources.
Core Business:		X		The update is considered business as usual.
Data Impact:		x		The updated plan will not result in different or additional data impacts.
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>There is no statutory requirement to carry out public consultation on the Local Enforcement Plan but a public consultation for a period of 6 weeks has taken place to enable residents and stakeholder comments to be taken into consideration. The response to the consultation is summarised within this report.</p> <p>Consultation with the Councils legal team has taken place and recommended amendments made to the Enforcement Plan wording. The Team highlighted the extensive amount of Officer time required to proceed with formal enforcement action, such as Injunction proceedings and the risks that can arise as a result of inadequate allocation of resources to such activity.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report seeks approval for the recommended changes following public consultation and to adopt the West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan 2026.
- 4.2 The Council's current plan was approved in 2022. The plan has been refreshed and modified to update the priority classification to ensure that efforts are focussed on the most significant breaches and to carry out initial assessment in a timelier way.
- 4.3 The main changes to the plan comprise the re-prioritisation of investigation types to include an urgent category 1, with investigation undertaken within 2 working days and an additional category 4 introduced for low priority investigations into enforcement matters that are unlikely to result in planning harm.
- 4.4 An enforcement plan is not a statutory requirement but is considered a useful tool to guide enforcement investigations to provide consistency and transparency in decision making.
- 4.5 It is recommended that the Executive approve the Planning Enforcement Plan 2026.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.2 This report seeks approval from the Executive to adopt the recommended changes to the West Berkshire Enforcement Plan 2026. The current enforcement plan was last updated in 2022. An enforcement plan is not a statutory requirement, but it is a useful tool to set out how the Council will address breaches of planning control.
- 5.3 Whilst planning enforcement action is discretionary, the duty to investigate an alleged breach is not. The national planning policy framework and national planning guidance provides that enforcement activity should be 'proportionate' and suggests publishing a local enforcement plan.
- 5.1 It is therefore considered an appropriate and useful tool to set out the Council's approach to planning enforcement investigations and provides a framework to guide such investigations and action.

Background

- 5.2 The Council's planning enforcement service comprises two Enforcement Officers, a recently recruited Compliance and Monitoring Officer and a Team Manager who also manages other functions within the Planning Service. On average 60 enforcement complaints are received per month. This results in a significant workload and the need for a clear framework of prioritisation to ensure that Officer time can be focussed on those breaches which have the potential to result in most serious impact. The enforcement process also requires significant input from Planning Officers where it is necessary to advise on planning policy requirements, make an assessment of planning harm and defend enforcement action at appeal or at any legal proceedings.

- 5.3 Many alleged breaches of planning control result in the submission of a planning application to regularise the breach. An average of 50% of enforcement complaints received are found not to be a breach of planning control or not expedient to take enforcement action because there is no unacceptable harm to amenity arising or it is policy compliant development. The minority of investigations result in the service of enforcement notices because in most cases, the Council will encourage the submission of a planning application and/or a negotiated compliance which is the most effective way to remedy breaches of planning control. This is also in accordance with national guidance and best practice.
- 5.4 A breach of planning control is not a criminal offence and there are no immediate fines or penalties that can be imposed when a breach is established. It is only when a notice is served, and the compliance period or requirements are not adhered to that the Council can consider the expediency of prosecution through the courts. Planning enforcement processes are lengthy, with a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against enforcement notices which can take a considerable amount of time to reach a decision, or through the courts in some circumstances. Enforcement appeals generally take much longer to reach decision than planning application appeals. At December 2025 written representation enforcement appeals took on average 72 (mean) weeks to reach decision. As such, a negotiated compliance through remedying the breach, or through consideration of a planning application allowing the full impacts to be assessed and conditions and mitigation secured, can be a more efficient way of dealing with breaches and have better outcomes.
- 5.5 In circumstances where there is a significant level of planning harm, stop notices or injunctions can be issued but there is a high bar to reach to justify this action and as such, these are used only in the most significant circumstances. Stop notices can have immediate and significant consequences to individuals or businesses and the Council must ensure that there is a justifiable benefit arising in terms of safeguarding amenity or public safety. Both injunctions and stop notices can be challenged by way of application to the High Court for judicial review which is a lengthy and costly process for all parties. There are financial implications for the Council should a stop notice be quashed, varied or withdrawn as compensation may be payable. As such there must be a proportionate and considered approach to this type of action.
- 5.6 Notwithstanding the above, expectations are high among elected members, residents and stakeholders, and there is significant pressure to serve an enforcement notice in the event of unauthorised development. It is acknowledged that resolving breaches through negotiation causes frustration as residents feel that the Council is not acting robustly, but this is usually the fastest way to resolve the breach.
- 5.7 Despite the constraints of the planning enforcement system, willful breaches of planning control are not condoned by the Council, and it is important to maintain public confidence in the planning system. In the year April 2025 – March 2026, the following enforcement actions were successfully undertaken;

Planning Enforcement Plan 2026

- 7 Enforcement Notices and 1 Breach of Condition Notice Served
- 4 Temporary Stop Notices served
- 2 S215 'Untidy Site' Notices served
- 27 Planning Contravention Notices served and 4 S330 Notices requiring information to be submitted to the Council within a defined timescale or risk of prosecution and financial consequences
- Interim injunction granted

5.8 However, enforcement action can place significant financial pressures on both the Council and landowners particularly in cases that are progressed through the court system which can take many months, if not years to resolve and which require legal representation. There are existing pressures on the Council's revenue budget arising from complex planning appeals, legal challenges, further policy requirements and implementation of planning reforms. Enforcement action must be balanced with what is reasonable, proportionate and achievable within available resources, ensuring undue financial pressure is not placed upon the Council and public funds are used appropriately to secure the best outcomes for the district.

Consultation Feedback

5.9 The Executive agreed in November 2025 to consult on the Draft Enforcement Plan for a period of 6 weeks. The consultation took place from 26 January 2026 until 9th March 2026.

5.10 75 responses were received; however not all questions were answered fully. 88% of respondents were residents of West Berkshire, 5.33% business owners, 8% Parish/Town Councils and 5% other. 45% of respondents stated that they had reported a breach of planning control and 29% stated they had been involved in or affected by an enforcement investigation.

5.11 The key themes arising from the consultation include;

- Stronger enforcement action, with less reliance on discretion and clear follow-through when breaches are identified.
- Greater transparency, including clearer explanations of enforcement decisions and public visibility of cumulative breaches.
- Fairness and independence, including requests for third-party or independent review of enforcement decisions.
- Improved communication with complainants and Parish / Town Councils throughout investigations.
- Concern that the new fourth priority category may legitimise non-action without clear review timescales.
- Need for increased resources, staffing and meaningful financial penalties to deter non-compliance.

5.12 Positive responses were received regarding the ease of reporting a case for investigation and general support for the 4 proposed categories. The majority of

responses indicated that there was some lack of confidence in the Councils investigation process, with only 36% of respondents responding positively in this regard.

- 5.13 Other key areas for improvements highlighted by respondents included communication, in particular the response time between initial complaint and update on progress and also discontent with how decisions have been reached. Parish and Town Councils requested to be kept up to date on major cases and improved information sharing to help manage resident concerns.
- 5.14 In terms of feedback on the plan itself, the majority of respondents stated the plan was somewhat clear or very clear in terms of explaining how planning breaches are investigated with 3% stating it was extremely clear.
- 5.15 Feedback has been received that more explanation of technical terms would be helpful and that the document is too lengthy and wordy, with a lack of clarity about the enforcement process.
- 5.16 Regarding the prioritisation levels, 49% of respondents considered the approach to be fair and proportionate but 28% did not agree. With regards to the introduction of category 4 cases, there is concern that these will never be investigated due to resource issues. A suggestion has been made for a periodic review of long-standing cases and that a timescale be added to investigation of these cases.
- 5.17 The Consultation asked respondents what they considered missing from the plan. In summary, there was a desire for a more robust, well-resourced enforcement regime with less discretion, clearer rules, stronger sanctions and demonstrable commitment to upholding planning decisions in the public interest.

Response to the Consultation Feedback

- 5.18 The feedback regarding the 4 priorities has been generally supportive and as such it is not considered necessary to make any substantive changes to the prioritisation levels proposed. The plan has been updated to address the consultation comments in the following ways;

You Said - Consultation Feedback	We Did - Council’s Response
Lack of confidence in the Planning Enforcement System	An information session is being prepared for Town and Parish Councils to assist with understanding. The format of the session is to be determined, but content will be made available for consideration and distribution.
Discontent regarding how decisions are reached	As part of the updates to the Planning Enforcement Public Access system consideration is being given to providing expediency reports to be available for

	public inspection. This will improve understanding.
Document is too lengthy and wordy and an explanation of technical terms would be useful such as ‘expediency’ and Emergency Plans.	An Executive Summary in Plain English has been added. The glossary has been updated to include definitions of Expediency and further detail of emergency plans as a footnote within the prioritisation table. Amendments have been made to some of the wording to simplify paragraphs.
Communication – in particular the time between complaint receipt and details of the action taken.	As part of a continuous improvement approach to the processing of investigations and available systems, the frequency and level of correspondence is being explored to establish areas for improvement.
Parish and Town Councils request more regular updates to support residents concerns	An information session is being prepared for Town and Parish Councils to assist with understanding. The format of the session is to be determined, but content will be made available for consideration and distribution.
Suggestion of 12-month review of plan and specifically Category 4	Agreed and detailed within the plan
Date of plan	Updated to 2026 and will be updated with the date of Adoption by Executive

5.19 Consultation responses highlighted concerns about transparency and subjectivity in enforcement decision-making and a lack of confidence. The Council recognises that the planning system is complex and the Council can only take action within the confines of the legislation which can be frustrating. Improving understanding and confidence cannot be achieved through this Enforcement Plan alone.

5.20 However, feedback on transparency and communication will inform ongoing work to improve access to information on enforcement investigations and to provide clearer updates to residents, Parish and Town Councils. A project has commenced in publishing enforcement notices on our Public Access system. Due to the confidential nature of enforcement cases, it is not possible to publish details of live cases, but part

of this plan, will be to review what additional information can be provided and the frequency of communication.

5.21 The priorities within the plan will therefore remain as follows;

Level 1 - Urgent Action (Initial Assessment within 2 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of substantial and irreversible impacts on the environment or local community. This may include, for example:

- Damage or felling of TPO trees;
- Ongoing unauthorised works to a listed building or demolition in a conservation area;
- Setting up of an unauthorised caravan site where there is an imminent risk of residential occupation;
- Developments which result in significant danger to the public;
- Failure to produce, agree and comply with a construction phase emergency plan* and construction work is continuing.

*Construction phase emergency plans are those either required by planning condition or approved as part of a planning application to demonstrate appropriate preparedness and response in the event of an incident at AWE, during the construction phase of the approved development.

Level 2 – High Priority (Initial Assessment within 15 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of significant impacts on the environment, and/or significant public interest. These will be cases which are less immediate than Level 1, but where a prompt response is required. This may include, for example:

- Breaches causing significant pollution or traffic hazards;
- Potential harm to listed buildings;
- Breaches causing significant ongoing local disturbances;
- Breaches of condition on major development sites (10 or more dwellings, 1,000sqm or more of floorspace or a site area of 1ha or more)
- Significant breaches where there is a risk of imminent immunity from enforcement action;
- Failure to produce, agree and comply with an operational phase emergency plan.*

*Operational Phase emergency plans are those either required by planning condition or approved as part of a planning application to demonstrate appropriate preparedness and response in the event of an incident at AWE, during the operation of the approved development.

Level 3 – Standard Priority (Initial Assessment within 40 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of planning harm. This will be the priority level for the majority of enforcement cases, and will normally include the following:

- Breaches that are likely to remain stable and that are unlikely to give rise to any severe or lasting harm to amenities;
- Householder developments;
- Fences, walls, gates and other means of enclosure;
- Breaches of condition on non-major developments;
- Unauthorised material changes of use.

Level 4 - Low Priority (Over 40 working days or not expedient to investigate)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control which are unlikely to result in harm and/or are trivial in nature. For example:

- Satellite dishes and flues;
- Building-mounted solar panels;
- Commercial adverts (not harming public safety);
- Temporary breaches;
- Untidy sites;
- Proactive internal referrals from other services within the Council.

Initial desktop study to include previous planning application(s) and/or enforcement investigation(s), establish if Permitted Development Rights are intact and use of online imagery. The outcome will either be an escalation of priority, or closure of the investigation. A periodic review of any cases which have not been re-prioritised or closed will take place quarterly.

5.22 The categorisation focusses on the potential for planning harm which refers to the negative impacts that an unauthorised development may have on amenity, in the public interest. This can involve issues such as impact upon neighbouring or visual amenity, noise, loss of light, harm to highway safety, environmental harm or other safety considerations.

5.23 The previous Enforcement Plan 2022 priorities and timescales were Level 1 – 5 working days, Level 2 – 20 working days and Level 3 - 30 working days.

5.24 The change to the prioritisation categories and timescales enables more serious breaches to be assessed more quickly and efforts concentrated on the most serious breaches of planning control.

6 Other options considered

6.1 There is the option to continue to work to the current 2022 Enforcement Plan. However, for the reasons set out within this report, this would not result in the most efficient and effective use of resources.

6.2 An enforcement plan is not a statutory requirement and there is the option to no longer work to an approved plan. This would result in a less efficient and transparent way of working which would not result in good customer service. This option is not therefore recommended.

7 Conclusion

7.1 It is recommended that the Executive approve adoption of the West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan 2026.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Equity Impact Assessment

8.2 Appendix B - Enforcement Plan 2026

Background Papers:

[West Berkshire Enforcement Plan 2022](#)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

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

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

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West Berkshire Council Equity Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE

March 2023

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Planning Service
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Enforcement Plan (2025)
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Existing – updated
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The Plan sets out the approach to enforcement investigations. If a breach is established and a planning application submitted, appropriate considerations are given to Equality impact and Human rights as part of the application process. This is the same for any decision to take enforcement action as it forms part of the expediency considerations on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Planning Enforcement concerns the use of land, and the enforcement priorities are related to the use of land and not individuals and seeks to achieve a consistency and transparency in decision making. As such, there are no elements of the plan that would indicate disproportionate impacts upon disadvantaged individuals or groups within the community.</p>
Completed By	Laura Callan
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	10.09.2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>An enforcement plan is a recommended approach to planning policy identified by national planning policy practice guidance.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The update to the policy in the main is regarding the priority for investigation and is related to land use and planning harm with timescales for investigation identified.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our</p>	<p>No public consultation has taken place. This plan has been updated from previous policy and the changes have been informed by working practices and cases to which previous policy has been applied.</p>

Equity Impact Assessment

ability to deliver our climate commitments.	
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>This plan has been updated from previous policy and the changes have been informed by working practices and cases to which previous policy has been applied. The absence of an enforcement plan would have greater risk of disproportionate impacts due to lack of a framework to guide investigations and transparency in decision making.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Care experienced people	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 4: Review

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

Review Date	10.09.2025
Person Responsible for Review	Laura Callan
Authorised By	

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

West Berkshire Council Planning Enforcement Plan – Adopted June 2026



Contents

This document sets out how the Council will deal with potential planning breaches.

It provides information and guidance for residents, developers and other interested parties, on how complaints about unauthorised development are handled. It seeks to balance the concerns of local residents with the rights of owners and sets out the priorities and timescales for responding to complaints, carrying out investigations and taking appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

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1. Executive Summary

This Planning Enforcement Plan explains how West Berkshire Council deals with suspected breaches of planning rules. It sets out what planning enforcement is, how to report concerns, what the Council can and cannot do, and what people can expect during an investigation.

Planning enforcement helps ensure development takes place in line with planning permissions and approved conditions, protecting local communities, the environment and the character of the area while respecting property owners' rights.

The Plan explains what types of building work or changes of use may need planning permission, as well as the kinds of issues the Council can investigate. It also makes clear that some matters such as boundary disputes, building regulations, neighbour disagreements or anti-social behaviour are dealt with by other services or organisations, not planning enforcement.

Anyone can report a suspected planning breach using the Council's online form. All reports are logged and assessed, but because enforcement is a demand-led service, cases are prioritised. The Plan sets out four priority levels so that the most serious and urgent breaches, such as those causing harm to people, the environment or heritage assets, are dealt with first.

The priority levels are as follows;

Level 1 - Urgent Action (Initial Assessment within 2 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of substantial and irreversible impacts on the environment or local community. This may include, for example:

- Damage or felling of TPO trees;
- Ongoing unauthorised works to a listed building or demolition in a conservation area;
- Setting up of an unauthorised caravan site where there is an imminent risk of residential occupation;
- Developments which result in significant danger to the public;
- Failure to produce, agree or comply with a construction phase emergency plan* and construction works are continuing.

*Construction phase emergency plans are those either required by planning condition or approved as part of a planning application to demonstrate appropriate preparedness and response in the event of an incident at AWE, during the construction phase of the approved development.

Level 2 – High Priority (Initial Assessment within 15 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of significant impacts on the environment, and/or significant public interest. These will be cases which are less immediate than Level 1, but where a prompt response is required. This may include, for example:

- Breaches causing significant pollution or traffic hazards;
- Potential harm to listed buildings;
- Breaches causing significant ongoing local disturbances;
- Breaches of condition on major development sites;
- Significant breaches where there is a risk of imminent immunity from enforcement action;
- Failure to produce, agree or comply with an operational phase emergency plan*

*Operational Phase emergency plans are those either required by planning condition or approved as part of a planning application to demonstrate appropriate preparedness and response in the event of an incident at AWE, during the operation of the approved development.

Level 3 – Standard Priority (Initial Assessment within 40 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of planning harm. This will be the priority level for the majority of enforcement cases, and will normally include the following:

- Breaches that are likely to remain stable and that are unlikely to give rise to any severe or lasting harm to amenities;
- Householder developments;
- Fences, walls, gates and other means of enclosure;
- Breaches of condition on non-major developments (10 or more dwellings, 1,000sqm or more of floorspace or a site area of 1ha or more);
- Unauthorised material changes of use.

Level 4 - Low Priority (Over 40 working days or not expedient to investigate)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control which are unlikely to result in harm and/or are trivial in nature. For example:

- Satellite dishes and flues;
- Building-mounted solar panels;
- Commercial adverts (not harming public safety);
- Temporary breaches;
- Untidy sites;
- Proactive internal referrals from other services within the Council.

Initial desktop study to include previous planning application(s) and/or enforcement investigation(s), establish if Permitted Development Rights are intact and use of online imagery. The outcome will either be an escalation of priority, or closure of the investigation. A periodic review of any cases which have not been re-prioritised or closed will take place quarterly.

Not every breach results in formal enforcement action. In some cases, there may be little or no planning harm, or the issue may be resolved through discussion, changes to the development, or a retrospective planning application. Where serious harm is identified and informal solutions are not appropriate, the Council can take formal enforcement action and, if necessary, pursue legal measures.

The Plan also explains the limits on enforcement, including legal time limits after which action may no longer be taken, as well as situations where breaches are criminal offences, such as unauthorised works to listed buildings or protected trees.

Clear service standards are included so that people know what to expect, including timescales for initial assessment, updates during an investigation and notification of outcomes. The Council aims to communicate clearly with both complainants and those who are the subject of an investigation, treating everyone fairly and with respect.

If someone is unhappy with how a case has been handled, the Plan explains what steps they can take, including how to use the Council's complaints process if they believe procedures were not followed. Overall, this Plan is intended to make planning enforcement clearer, more transparent and more consistent, while ensuring that decisions are fair, proportionate and focused on protecting the public interest

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2. Introduction

- 2.1 Planning enforcement plays a key role in upholding the integrity of the planning process and helps maintain public confidence in the planning system. As the local planning authority, West Berkshire Council has a duty to investigate reports of alleged breaches of planning control, and the discretion to take formal enforcement action where appropriate. This Plan explains how the Council investigates alleged breaches of planning control and how decisions on enforcement action are made. The Council aims to provide an efficient and effective planning enforcement service that is focused on protecting the district against harmful development in a way that is clear, consistent and proportionate.
- 2.2 The statutory basis for planning enforcement is contained in Part VII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning Act 2008 (Commencement No 8) and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 4 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024. Enforcement powers available to the Council include the service of Enforcement Warning Notices, Enforcement Notices, Breach of Condition Notices and Stop Notices, as well as the taking of legal proceedings by way of an injunction where appropriate.
- 2.3 Development without planning permission may cause frustration, upset and distress for residents, businesses and visitors to the district. However, to undertake works without first obtaining planning permission is not a criminal offence and the planning legislation specifically allows for the submission of planning applications for development already undertaken. While the Council does not condone deliberate breaches of planning control, the purpose of enforcement is not to punish, but to address planning harm and secure appropriate outcomes. There are, however, exceptions where criminal offences arise, including unauthorised works to listed buildings, unlawful advertisements, unauthorised works to trees protected by tree preservation orders, and where there is non-compliance following formal enforcement action.
- 2.4 The use of enforcement powers is guided by the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 60 of the Framework outlines that:
- “Effective enforcement is important to maintain public confidence in the planning system. Enforcement action is discretionary, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control. They should consider publishing a local enforcement plan to manage enforcement proactively, in a way that is appropriate to their area. This should set out how they will monitor the implementation of planning permissions, investigate alleged cases of unauthorised development and take action where appropriate.”*
- 2.5 All complaints regarding potential breaches of planning regulations are registered on our system and depending on the severity, will be investigated by an officer who, in conjunction with the Planning Support, Enforcement & Developer Contributions Manager, and the Development Management team where appropriate, will decide what action should be taken. Decisions are based on the merits of each individual

case, and enforcement action is taken only when it is considered rational, reasonable, proportionate and expedient.

3. Scope of planning enforcement

3.1 Planning permission is only needed if the work being carried out meets the statutory definition of 'development' which is set out in section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. 'Development' includes:

- building operations (e.g. structural alterations, construction, rebuilding, most demolition);
- material changes of use of land and buildings;
- engineering operations (e.g. groundworks);
- mining operations;
- other operations normally undertaken by a person carrying on a business as a builder.
- subdivision of a building (including any part it) used as a dwellinghouse for use as 2 or more separate dwelling houses

3.2 Planning permission is not required for some categories of work that do not amount to 'development'. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- interior alterations (except mezzanine floors which increase the floorspace of retail premises by more than 200 square metres)
- building operations which do not materially affect the external appearance of a building. The term 'materially affect' has no statutory definition but is linked to the significance of the change which is made to a building's external appearance.
- a change in the primary use of land or buildings, where the before and after use falls within the same use class.

3.3 Development does not in all instances require a planning application to be made for permission to carry out the development. In some cases, development will be permitted under national permitted development rights. Permitted development rights are a national grant of planning permission which allow certain building works and changes of use to be carried out without having to make a planning application. Permitted development rights are subject to conditions and limitations to control impacts and to protect local amenity.

3.4 There may also be a locally granted planning permission in place that covers the type of development, in the form of a Local Development Order, a Neighbourhood Development Order or a Community Right to Build Order.

3.5 In all other cases it will be necessary to make a planning application to the local planning authority.

- 3.6 If development is carried out without the necessary planning permission, this may lead to enforcement action. The Council's Planning Enforcement team investigate alleged breaches of planning control and seek appropriate resolutions.
- 3.7 The Planning Enforcement team also ensure compliance with other associated legislation, including listed building consent and advertisement consent.
- 3.8 The Council's Planning Enforcement Service can investigate alleged breaches of planning control. This typically includes the following:
- Unauthorised building works or engineering works taking place without planning permission;
 - Unauthorised material changes of use of land or buildings without planning permission;
 - Developments not complying with planning permission, including any planning conditions of obligations (this does not include any covenants);
 - Unauthorised works to listed buildings – both internal and external – without listed building consent;
 - Display of unlawful advertisements without advertisement consent;
 - Listed buildings in serious disrepair; and
 - Where the condition/upkeep of buildings or land is adversely affecting the amenity of neighbouring land.
- 3.9 The Council's Planning Enforcement Service is unable to investigate matters as detailed, but not limited to the following as these fall outside the planning system:
- Internal works to a non-listed building, as these are not 'development';
 - Boundary wall disputes and other landownership issues as these are civil matters outside of planning legislation;
 - Party Wall Act;
 - Building Regulations compliance;
 - Legal covenants;
 - Devaluation of property;
 - Obstructions, parking, traffic enforcement and any other matters affecting the public highway*;
 - Anti-social behaviour*;
 - Civil neighbour disputes;
 - Dangerous structures that are not listed buildings*;
 - Statutory nuisances, including noise, odour etc.*;
 - Events/potential breaches that may occur in the future.
- 3.10 The Council or Partner Agencies (such as Environmental Health, Environment Agency, Police Force, Housing and Council Tax), have other powers to deal with these issues - please see Useful Contacts in Appendix A of this plan.

4. Principles

4.1 West Berkshire Council undertake a firm but rational and reasoned approach to regulation based upon the following principles:

4.1.1 Proportionality

Enforcement action will be proportionate to the scale of the alleged breach and the seriousness of the harm caused. We will seek to minimise the cost of compliance by taking proportionate action. When it is in the public interest to do so, we may prosecute individuals or organisations who do not comply with any formal notice served on them. When it is appropriate, we also have the option of taking direct action, having regard to the degree of harm and public safety.

4.1.2 Consistency

We will take the same approach in similar circumstances, where possible, to achieve results. We will investigate each matter on its own merits. We will also be consistent in how we treat customers.

4.1.3 Transparency

We will ensure that everyone involved with cases understands our processes and procedures, including what rights of complaint and appeal may be open to them. We may seek feedback from service users to learn and improve.

4.1.4 Targeting of enforcement action and raising awareness

Planning enforcement is a high volume, demand-based service. Consequently, targeted enforcement action is very important. Raising wider general awareness of planning management and enforcement will help to reduce unauthorised works and increase public confidence in our service.

4.1.5 Accountability

This local enforcement plan document, which has been agreed by the Planning Portfolio Holder and by the Planning Committee chairs, sets our priorities for action. The success of the policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

5. Limits on taking enforcement action

5.1 Timescales

Section 171B of the Town and Country Planning Act (see also The Planning Act 2008)

(Commencement No. 8) and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No.4 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024) sets out time limits for taking enforcement action. In most cases, development becomes immune from enforcement if no action is taken:

- Within **10 years** of substantial completion for a breach of planning control consisting of operational development, where substantial completion took place on or after 25 April 2024
- Within **10 years** for an unauthorised change of use to a single dwelling house where the change of use took place on or after 25 April 2024
- Within **4 years** of substantial completion for a breach of planning control consisting of operational development where substantial completion took place before 25 April 2024
- Within **4 years** for an unauthorised change of use to a single dwelling house where the change of use took place before 25 April 2024
- Within **10 years** for any other breach of planning control (essentially other changes if use)

After these periods the Council cannot take action and the development becomes lawful. The landowner can apply for a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development (CLEUD) after this period to regularise the situation. This involves providing evidence that proves on the balance of probability that a breach of planning control has occurred for the relevant time period.

5.2 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

These are also subject to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Carrying out works that affect the special interest of a listed building and the demolition of a building in a conservation area without consent are both criminal offences. Expert heritage advice should be sought if there is any doubt as to whether consent should be obtained and, if in doubt, the council offers a formalised Pre-Application service, before work is undertaken. For listed buildings there is no time limit to taking enforcement action. It is also a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised alterations to a listed building without appropriate permission.

5.3 Scheduled Monuments

Although scheduled monument consent is a separate regime, unauthorised works are a criminal offence under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

5.4 Tree Preservation Orders/Ancient Woodland

It is a criminal offence to cut down, lop, willfully destroy or damage a protected tree without the Council's consent. The Council can prosecute you for breaching a Tree

Preservation Order and also for damaging or destroying areas of ancient woodland. There is no time limit to taking enforcement action.

5.5 Adverts

The display of advertisements is subject to a separate consent process within the planning system. Parties who display an advertisement in contravention of the planning regulations are committing a criminal offence. For example, by displaying an advert without the necessary consent or without complying with the conditions attached to that consent.

5.6 Minerals and Waste

Minerals and Waste Enforcement can at times be considered a specialist area of planning control within the Council's development and regulation function and in conjunction with other external agencies. As such, it can sometimes require a different approach to mainstream planning enforcement depending on the circumstances. West Berkshire Council therefore employs specialist officers who should be contacted in the first instance via Minerals@westberks.gov.uk for any help, advice and guidance on monitoring, relevant planning permissions for minerals, waste or Regulation 3 developments and legal agreements attached to minerals and waste sites'.

6. Making an enforcement complaint

6.1 Complaints about potential breaches of planning control can only be made using the online form on the Council's website. This ensure that sufficient details are included to enable the Council to effectively categorise the complaint/allegation.

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/planning-breach>

The following information is requested:

- An accurate description of the location or address for the site.
- A detailed description of the activities taking place including what harm the alleged breach is causing and/or how it affects you.
- Details of those persons responsible for the alleged breach or the landowners (if known).
- The date and times of when the alleged breach took place including when it first started.
- Any other information or evidence that may be able to assist, e.g. a planning application number; any previous problems/ breaches.
- Your name, address, phone number and e-mail address

6.2 All the questions/fields on the form should be completed and where possible photographs should be attached.

- 6.3 The Council will not investigate anonymous complaints. It is important that officers can understand the complaint, identify the harm and make a fair assessment. We also need to prevent malicious and vexatious complaints.
- 6.4 West Berkshire Council staff will treat all parties to a complaint with respect, and we expect the same in return. We appreciate that concerns often involve highly emotive matters, however we have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to abuse of our staff. If we are subject to verbal abuse or any other unacceptable behaviour, we reserve the right to refuse to communicate via telephone and email and will request that all correspondence is in writing via a letter or email sent to the attention of the Planning Support, Enforcement & Developer Contributions Manager. Where a single point of contact will be allocated

We make sure that we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This includes making sure we consider adjustments for people with protected characteristics.

Some people may have difficulty expressing themselves or communicating clearly and/or appropriately. We will always consider the needs and circumstances that we have been made aware of, before deciding how best to manage the situation. This will include making reasonable adjustments. However, this does not mean we will tolerate abusive language, shouting, or other unacceptable behaviour or actions.

6.5 **Confidentiality**

Any details submitted to the Council in relation to an enforcement complaint will be treated with the strictest confidence.

The Council will not reveal the identity of the complaints to the owner or responsible party(s). However, sometimes complainants may be asked to provide evidence to assist further with the matter or for any legal proceedings of the investigation.

Enforcement complaints may be the subject of a Freedom of Information or Environmental Information Regulations request. In addition, a request can be made for all personal data, we hold about a person under the Data Protection Act. If such a request is made, we will have to consider the matter for release.

7. **Priorities for planning enforcement investigation**

- 7.1 As indicated, the Planning Enforcement service is a high volume, demand-based service. Therefore, it is important that different types of breach are prioritised in a clear and transparent way. The prioritisation set out below is based upon the significance, urgency and seriousness of a reported breach. The categorisation focusses on the potential for planning harm which refers to the negative impacts that an unauthorised development may have on amenity, in the public interest. This can involve issues such as impact upon neighbouring or visual amenity, noise, loss of light, harm to highway safety, environmental harm or other safety considerations.

7.2 All investigations will be carried out thoroughly and accurately in accordance with the following priorities.

Level 1 - Urgent Action (Initial Assessment within 2 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of substantial and irreversible impacts on the environment or local community. This may include, for example:

- Damage or felling of TPO trees;
- Ongoing unauthorised works to a listed building or demolition in a conservation area;
- Setting up of an unauthorised caravan site where there is an imminent risk of residential occupation;
- Developments which result in significant danger to the public;
- Failure to produce, agree or comply with a construction phase emergency plan* and construction works are continuing.

*Construction phase emergency plans are those either required by planning condition or approved as part of a planning application to demonstrate appropriate preparedness and response in the event of an incident at AWE, during the construction phase of the approved development.

Level 2 – High Priority (Initial Assessment within 15 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of significant impacts on the environment, and/or significant public interest. These will be cases which are less immediate than Level 1, but where a prompt response is required. This may include, for example:

- Breaches causing significant pollution or traffic hazards;
- Potential harm to listed buildings;
- Breaches causing significant ongoing local disturbances;
- Breaches of condition on major development sites;
- Significant breaches where there is a risk of imminent immunity from enforcement action;
- Failure to produce, agree or comply with an operational phase emergency plan*

*Operational Phase emergency plans are those either required by planning condition or approved as part of a planning application to demonstrate appropriate preparedness and response in the event of an incident at AWE, during the operation of the approved development.

Level 3 – Standard Priority (Initial Assessment within 40 working days)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control where there is a risk of planning harm. This will be the priority level for the majority of enforcement cases, and will normally include the following:

- Breaches that are likely to remain stable and that are unlikely to give rise to any severe or lasting harm to amenities;
- Householder developments;
- Fences, walls, gates and other means of enclosure;
- Breaches of condition on non-major developments (10 or more dwellings, 1,000sqm or more of floorspace or a site area of 1ha or more);
- Unauthorised material changes of use.

Level 4 - Low Priority (Over 40 working days or not expedient to investigate)

Alleged/potential breaches of planning control which are unlikely to result in harm and/or are trivial in nature. For example:

- Satellite dishes and flues;
- Building-mounted solar panels;
- Commercial adverts (not harming public safety);
- Temporary breaches;
- Untidy sites;
- Proactive internal referrals from other services within the Council.

Initial desktop study to include previous planning application(s) and/or enforcement investigation(s), establish if Permitted Development Rights are intact and use of online imagery. The outcome will either be an escalation of priority, or closure of the investigation. A periodic review of any cases which have not been re-prioritised or closed will take place quarterly.

Please note: Officers may re-prioritise cases (both up or down) after completing the initial investigation, or receiving further complaints based upon the nature of the alleged breach and its impact. Whilst Officers may re-prioritise, the final decision regarding the prioritisation category will rest with the Planning Support, Enforcement and Developer Contributions Manager.

8. Service standards and objectives

8.1 We recognise the importance of keeping individuals up to date with our progress. Some investigations can take longer than others, but we will deal with all cases in a rational and transparent way.

8.2 Complainants can expect:

- A written acknowledgement within two working days of the complaint being submitted via the Report a Breach online form. The case will be placed in the relevant priority. The final decision on the priority category given to a case rests with the Planning Support, Enforcement & Developer Contributions

Manager. The assessment of priority will be made wholly objectively, irrespective of the nature or status of the party making the complaint.

- Site visits and initial assessments to be undertaken in accordance with the 'Timeline' section below.
- To be informed at key stages of the process, when necessary, e.g. the complainant(s) will be advised if a planning application is invited; when a planning application is received; whether an enforcement notice has been served etc.
- To be informed of the final outcome of their complaint.
- In some cases, we may ask a complainant for further details. If the complainant is unwilling to assist, this may result in the Council not being able to pursue the investigation due to insufficient evidence.
- There are no fixed timescales for the closing enforcement cases, as investigations and outcomes can vary. However, we will seek to provide an update at each significant stage. Complainants can also email the case officer who will respond in line with Service standards.

8.3 Owners of the land/properties that are the subject of the complaint can expect:

- Clear and open communication on the circumstances of the alleged breach including an explanation of what steps are required to resolve any breach and the possible consequences if those steps are not taken.
- A thorough, objective and impartial investigation of the complaint before a decision is made.
- To be given an opportunity to put things right, along with information on how long they have to do this and the consequences of failing to do so.
- Formal enforcement action to be taken, if necessary and appropriate, or if attempts to negotiate a remedy fail.
- To be informed in writing if the Council decides to proceed to formal enforcement action and what form that will take.
- Information on how to appeal against notices, where applicable.
- To be informed when the investigation is completed and the case is closed.

Investigating possible breaches of planning permission can be stressful for both the party making the complaint as well as the person under investigation. This is partly due to the different ways in which an investigation can progress, and the timescales involved.

To try to ease concerns and assist with the uncertainty, the enforcement officers will provide updates during an investigation if and when there is a significant change/event and when the case is closed/complete. This will normally be in an email.

9. Investigation and assessment of alleged breaches

9.1 Receipt of the complaint

When a complaint is received by the Council it will be subject to initial screening and assigned a priority level between 1 and 4.

The complainant will receive an acknowledgement within two working days of receipt. Planning Enforcement can only investigate breaches of planning control. Our reporting system asks questions about the breach, allows users to upload documents/photographs and can signpost enquiries to the right service or organisation if it is considered the allegation is not a planning matter.

The Council will not investigate persistent complaints which have previously been investigated and resolved or vexatious or malicious complaints.

9.2 Initial assessment

The aim of the initial assessment is to establish whether there has been a breach of planning control and determine the appropriate first response. In most circumstances, this will include a site visit by the investigating enforcement officer. Once the initial assessment/site visit has been carried out, we will notify the owner or occupier of the subject site, as to whether it falls into the category of a breach of planning control.

If no breach is discovered the case will be closed and relevant parties will be informed and provided with an explanation as to why the case was closed.

Where the nature of extent of a breach is not straightforward, consideration will be given to serving a Planning Contravention Notice (PCN) to ascertain key facts.

For serious breaches of planning control, consideration will be given to serving a Temporary Stop Notice or seeking an Injunction from the High Court.

10. Responses to breaches

Enforcement action should be proportionate to the breach of planning control to which it relates and taken when it is expedient to do so. Whilst wilful breaches of planning law are not condoned, where the balance of public interest lies will vary from case to case.

There is no statutory requirement for the Council to take enforcement action against alleged breaches of planning control. Enforcement action is based on planning merit which requires a planning judgement as to whether formal action is appropriate. In some cases, the Council may decide that enforcement action will not be taken and that an alternative approach is more appropriate (for example a retrospective application, further negotiation, no further action etc).

The following are possible outcomes of the investigation.

10.1 Breach causing no material planning harm

The fact that a breach of planning control has occurred does not automatically mean that formal action will be taken. Some breaches of planning control are minor and

therefore cause limited or no planning harm (i.e. if an application were to be submitted it would be unconditionally approved).

In these instances, the Council will use its discretion not to take further action as it would not serve a useful purpose or be a good use of our time and resources. We will however advise the offender of the breach of planning control advising that planning permission is required for the works undertaken and of their right to regularise the development retrospectively under Section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

10.2 **Negotiation to find a solution**

Resolving breaches of planning control can take a long time, particularly when taking formal enforcement action. The amount of time it takes to resolve a breach of planning control very much depends on the severity of the breach combined with the actions and/or reactions of the landowner(s)/occupier(s). Negotiations can often lead to a quicker resolution and to a better overall outcome.

Where appropriate we will seek to negotiate with the owner/occupier and will consider options to address the planning harm resulting from the breach. The negotiation process may involve voluntary remedial works to remove any unauthorised development, the cessation of any unauthorised uses, or steps to limit any breach to a level where there is no planning harm.

10.3 **Invite a Retrospective Planning Application**

Upon investigating a breach of planning control, officers will consider the likelihood of planning permission being granted for the development upon application. Where appropriate, we will invite the submission of a planning application in an attempt to regularise the breach of planning control. In determining the application, the council could impose conditions on the planning permission to address the harm being caused by the unauthorised development and/or in order for the council to retain control of the development. This approach allows the planning merits of the development to be fully and openly considered.

Applications for retrospective planning permission are considered in the same way as those for proposed development. Although the Council may invite an application, it cannot be assumed that permission will be granted, and then in doing so the Council does not fetter its discretion prior to the determination of any application for planning permission.

The Council may, where it is appropriate and reasonable to do so, suspend any formal enforcement action whilst a retrospective planning application is being considered. However, where appropriate, the council will not allow the application process to unreasonably delay enforcement proceedings. The Council will consider issuing an Enforcement Warning Notice at this stage.

10.4 **Formal Enforcement Action**

Almost all formal enforcement action is based on planning merits and can therefore only be taken where the development fails to comply with national and local planning

policies. In some cases, it will be necessary for the Council to take formal enforcement action against a breach of planning control. Formal enforcement action will be taken where it is reasonable and justified to do so. Such scenarios may include:

- where negotiation has failed within a reasonable timeframe to resolve the breach of planning control occurring
- where a breach of planning control has a serious harmful impact that it requires formal action

When assessing whether formal action should be taken, the Council will ensure that the action is reasonable, proportionate and is in the public interest in order to achieve a satisfactory result. The Council will consider what the effect of formal action will be and if it will have a meaningful outcome. In planning enforcement, 'expediency' refers to whether taking action is justified, proportionate and in the public interest, having regard to planning policies and material planning considerations. It does not mean convenience.

All enforcement action follows an investigation and will be taken in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

The full planning enforcement toolkit is described here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-effective-enforcement>

10.5 Appeal / Court Challenges

Many forms of formal enforcement action are subject to appeal processes and challenge in the courts. Where necessary, the Council will follow due process to defend its actions and pursue the appropriate remedy of breaches of planning control.

The procedure to be followed in the event of an appeal against a notice, or a court challenge is dictated by the relevant authority (The Planning Inspectorate or the Courts). The Council will endeavour to defend its actions in such cases and, where appropriate, recover any incurred costs resulting from unreasonable behaviour on the part of the appellant through the appeal process.

11. Compliance

Once a notice has become effective, the Council will note the compliance date requirement in their systems. A site visit appointment will be carried out to check compliance shortly after the compliance period ends. If at the site visit compliance with a notice is apparent, a letter will be sent to explain that compliance with the notice has been noted on file and the case will be closed.

Where the owner occupier or developer has not fully complied with the requirements of the notice, the Council will proceed with the next stages of the investigation. This will include the consideration of the following options to resolve this breach:

11.1.1 Prosecution

We will consider commencing a prosecution in the Courts against any person who has failed to comply with the requirement(s) of any enforcement notice, or Breach of Condition Notice where the date for compliance has passed and the requirements have not been complied with. Prior to commencing with any legal proceedings, we will need to be satisfied that they are in the public interest and that there is enough evidence to offer a realistic prospect of conviction.

Unauthorised adverts and unauthorised works to any tree the subject of a Tree Preservation Order are offences, and we can initiate prosecution without the need to issue a notice.

11.1.2 Removal Notices (advertisements)

We will seek removal of any structure used to display an advertisement. Where the notice is not complied with, we may undertake the works and recover the expenses for doing so.

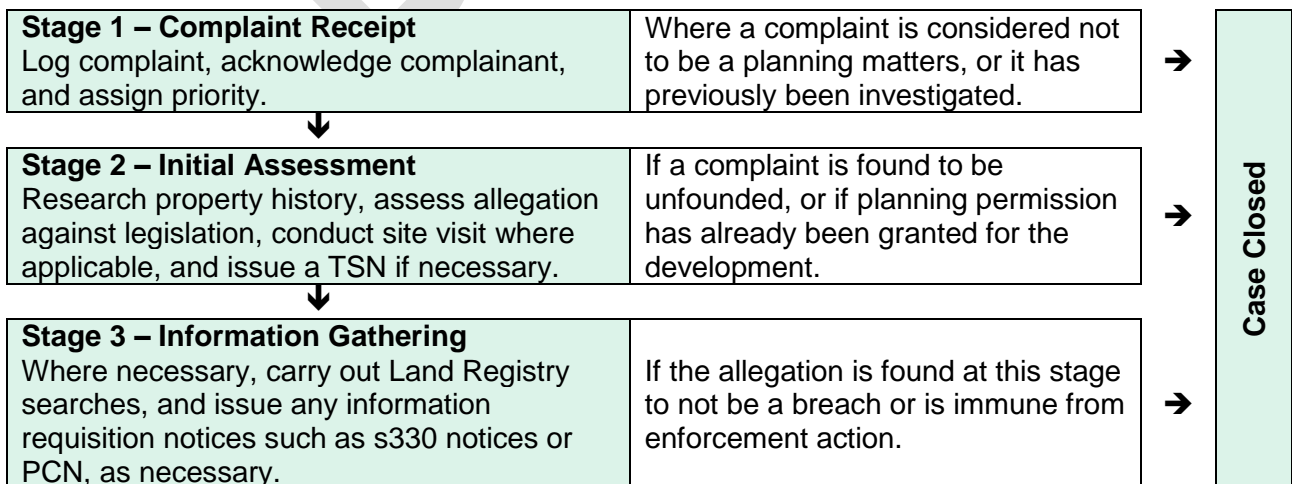
11.1.3 Replacement Notices (trees)

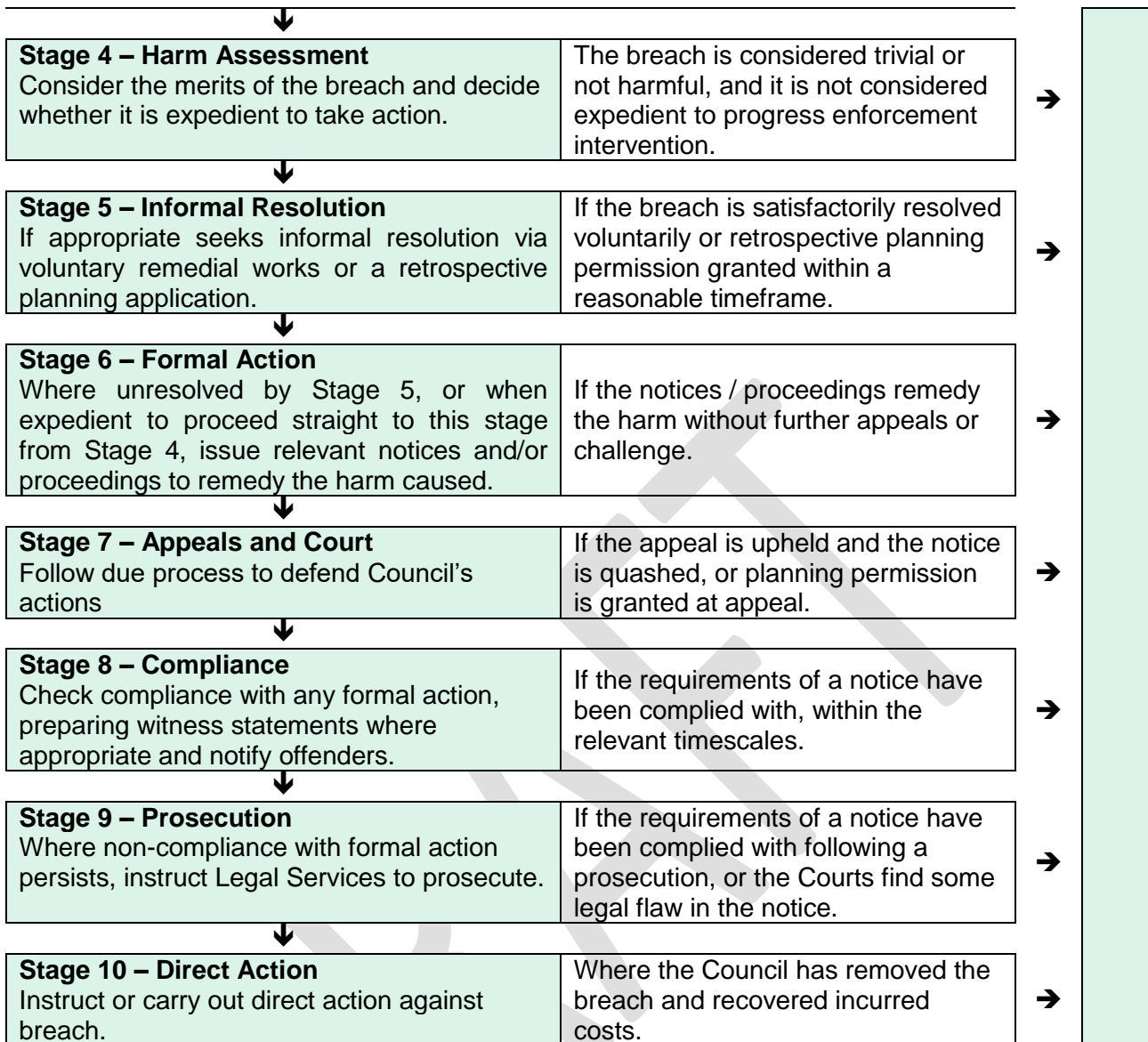
It is open to the Council to issue tree replacement notices, requiring trees to be replanted.

11.1.4 Direct Action

Where the terms of an Enforcement Notice or Section 215 notice have not been met within the compliance period (other than the discontinuance of the use of land), we will consider whether it is expedient to exercise our powers to enter the land and take steps to remedy harm. We would seek to recover from the person who is the owner of the land any expenses reasonably incurred by us in doing so.

11.2 The Enforcement Process





11.3 Proactive Monitoring of Planning Permission

Whilst the responsibility to adhere to planning permissions and comply with associated conditions lies with those undertaking the development, the planning service recognise the importance of addressing harmful breaches of planning control. As a result, where possible and where resources allow, the department may use its own resources and promote cross department liaison to identify breaches of planning control and monitor compliance with conditions imposed on planning permissions, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and Planning Obligations (S106) monitoring.

Local land charges are generally financial charges or restrictions on the use of land which are governmental in character and imposed by public authorities under statutory powers. WBC uses this power to enforce things such as: conditions imposed in a planning permission (these form most charges); Listed Buildings, Conservation

Areas; Tree Preservation Orders, Planning and Enforcement Notices. The charge will affect the land rather than the person and if registered correctly, will show up on any search carried out by a person on the land it is registered against.

11.4 **Equality**

As required as part of the Equality Act 2010 Section 149, in the drafting of this plan due regard has been taken of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relations between different groups. It is not considered that the Enforcement Plan would conflict with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 or the Council's policy on equality.

12. **What to do if you are dissatisfied with the Council's decision**

There is no third-party right of appeal within the planning system. Enforcement action is therefore taken at the sole discretion of the Council. An investigation will not normally be re-opened, unless significant further information or evidence is provided, showing compelling reason to review a previous decision. To make a request of this nature you should contact the planning enforcement team in the normal manner, providing any new information you think should be considered.

If you think the Council hasn't followed the correct procedures in coming to their decision, then a complaint about the process can be made using the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure, which can be found here: <https://westberks.gov.uk/complaints>

The subjects of any formal action will have their rights of appeal set out in any enforcement notice they receive.

13. **Review of Planning Enforcement Plan**

Regular reviews of this enforcement plan will be necessary to ensure it remains current with the most up to date government legislation and guidance. Reviews will therefore be carried out when legislation and guidance changes are introduced or if a high number of enquiries are received about a particular part of the plan from customers. We welcome comments on this Planning Enforcement Plan and any other matter relating to the Enforcement Service.

Please contact:

Planning Support, Enforcement & Developer Contributions Manager

Council Offices, Market Street

Newbury, RG14 5LD

Main Number (01635) 551111

Email planningenforcement@westberks.gov.uk

Specific enquiries relating to a particular case should be referred to the case officer or their immediate line-manager.

DRAFT

Appendix A – Useful Contacts

Department	Contact Information
<p>Report a Breach</p> <p>The link to our online report a breach form, where all details can be logged securely and photographs, documents can be uploaded.</p>	<p>planningservices – Report a Breach</p>
<p>Do I Need Planning Permission</p> <p>The link to find out if proposed development can be considered as Permitted Development.</p>	<p>planningservices. Find out if you need Planning Permission</p>
<p>Building Control</p> <p>The main purpose of Building Control is to ensure that all building work complies with the Building Regulations. Building Control also investigate buildings and other structures which may be dangerous.</p>	<p>Email: help@BCSolutions.org.uk</p>
<p>Environmental Health</p> <p>The team regulate a wide range of activities, and operate to a clear enforcement policy of their own. Public Protection Services consists of those matters enforced by the Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing Services</p>	<p>Email: ehadvice@westberks.gov.uk</p>
<p>Highways</p> <p>The highways team co-ordinates and monitors public highways in the District.</p>	<p>Visit https://www.westberks.gov.uk/roadtransportandparking for a list of all the areas the highways team cover</p>
<p>Housing</p> <p>For housing support and advice</p>	<p>visit https://www.westberks.gov.uk/housing for a list of services and ways to contact the team specific to your complaint</p>
<p>Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW)</p> <p>If you witness a suspected wildlife crime in action call 999 immediately and ask for the police.</p>	<p>For all other enquires call 101. For further information on reporting, or visit https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/partnership-for-action-against-wildlife-crime</p>
<p>Trees</p> <p>The arboricultural service deals with most tree-related issues</p>	<p>Visit https://www.westberks.gov.uk/treesandhedgerows for further information. Email: trees@westberks.gov.uk</p>

Appendices B – Enforcement Glossary

This glossary provides the enforcement options available to the local planning authority.

1. Breach of Condition Notice (BCN)

A breach of conditions notice under Section 187A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires its recipient to secure compliance with the terms of a planning condition or conditions specified by the Local Planning Authority in the notice. There is no right to appeal against this notice and prosecution can be brought in the Magistrates' Court for the offence of contravening a breach of condition notice.

2. Default Powers

The Council may enter the land and take the necessary action to secure compliance when enforcement notices are in effect. This is only used in extreme cases and when resources allow. The Council will seek to recover all costs associated with carrying out the works in default.

3. Discontinuance Notice

Where a person has displayed an advertisement with deemed consent that the authority is satisfied causes a substantial injury to the amenity of the area or is a danger to members of the public, a discontinuance notice can be served under Regulation 8 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 seeking the removal of the advert.

A local planning authority may take discontinuance action if it is satisfied that such action is necessary to remedy a substantial injury to the amenity of the locality or a danger to members of the public. As "substantial injury" to the amenity of the locality is a more rigorous test than the "interests" of amenity, local planning authorities will need to justify this in their statement of reasons.

4. Enforcement Warning Notice

An enforcement warning notice formalises the process for a local planning authority to invite a retrospective planning application.

Under section 172ZA of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, where a local planning authority considers that unauthorised development has a reasonable prospect of being acceptable in planning terms, it can issue an enforcement warning notice. The notice will set out the matters that appear to be a breach of planning control and state that, unless an application is made by a specified date, further enforcement action may

be taken.

The issue of an enforcement warning notice constitutes taking enforcement action for the purposes of section 171B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5. Expediency

This term is used to describe how decisions are made about whether it is considered reasonable and proportionate to take formal enforcement action.

6. Injunction

This involves seeking an order from the court preventing an activity or operation from taking place. Failure to comply with the requirements of an injunction amounts to a criminal offence.

7. Listed Building Enforcement Notice

A Listed Building enforcement notice under Section 38 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 will require the recipient to secure compliance with the terms of the notice. Works to listed buildings without consent is a criminal offence and prosecution may occur alongside the enforcement notice, subject to severity/context. There is a right of appeal of this notice

8. Negotiation

Negotiation is encouraged in all but the most serious cases as the best way to resolve a breach and in some cases can be more expedient than issuing an enforcement notice.

9. Planning Contravention Notice (PCN)

This is a notice which allows the Council to collect evidence which will help to determine if a breach is taking place and the next steps. The owner and/or person responsible have 21 days to respond and failure to do this may result in prosecution

10. Planning Enforcement Order

Where a person deliberately conceals unauthorised development, the deception may not come to light until after the time limits for taking enforcement action (Section 171B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) have expired. A planning enforcement order enables the Council to take action in relation to an apparent breach of planning control notwithstanding that the time limits may have expired.

11. Prosecution

It is a criminal offence not to comply with the requirements of a statutory notice, to display an advertisement without consent or undertake works to a listed building without consent. The Council can prosecute or formally caution.

12. Section 172 Enforcement Notices

The enforcement notice allows the Council to formally require a breach of planning control to be remedied. Government guidance states that enforcement notices should only be served when expedient to do so. Failure to comply within the specified timeframe is a criminal offence which can lead to prosecution proceedings. Enforcement notices can be appealed, and the Planning Inspectorate can decide to uphold the notice, amend it or have it quashed.

13. Section 215 Notices

Where the condition of land or a building is adversely affecting the amenity of a neighbourhood the Council may issue a Notice under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, requiring the owner or occupier to remedy the condition of the land or building. Failure to comply with the Notice is a criminal offence. The Council has powers, where a Notice has not been complied with, to enter the land and carry out the work itself and recover the costs from the owner.

14. Stop Notice

This can be used in conjunction with an enforcement notice where the breach of planning control is causing serious harm and should only be used in extreme cases. In such cases where stop notices are issued the Council may be liable to pay compensation if it is later decided that the stop notice was not appropriate. For these reasons, serious consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of serving a stop notice.

15. Temporary Stop Notice

These are similar to stop notices but take effect immediately from the moment they are displayed on a site and last for up to 28 days. A temporary stop notice would be issued only where it is appropriate that the use or activity should cease immediately because of its effect on (for example) amenity, the environment or public safety. It may be issued even when planning permission has been granted for development, for example, in a case where the developer is not complying with conditions attached to the permission.

16. Urgent Works Notice

This is a notice under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that applies to unoccupied listed buildings in serious disrepair. It enables the Council to order urgent works to preserve the building, for example to make it weather tight and secure. If the notice is not complied with the Council may carry out the works in default and recover the costs from the owner.

New Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	11 June 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Vicky Poole & Councillor Justin Pemberton
Report Author:	Richard Howroyd

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To introduce a new Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy that will improve procurement and commissioning across West Berkshire with greater market engagement to encourage small and medium sized enterprises and the voluntary sector to work with the Council.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Executive adopt the Procurement Strategy
- 2.2 The Executive adopt the “Think Local” Social Value Strategy.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The Procurement Strategy will support the financial sustainability objectives of the Council by introducing up to date commercial practices relating to procurement and contract management. The “Think Local” Social Value Strategy will improve local economic benefit and increase the Council’s ability to leverage Social Value from contracts.

New Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy

Human Resource:	As part of the Procurement & Commissioning restructure a new role has been created within Community Services to manage Social Value for the Council. The role is out for recruitment.			
Legal:	<p>The strategies ensure the Council complies with all key procurement legislation - The Procurement Act 2023 and the Health & Care Act 2022 (Provider Selection Regime). It also considers amendments to S17 of the Local Government Act 1988 that will allow the Council to reserve some contracts to local suppliers.</p> <p>They update the Council’s approach to Social Value as defined in the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and the National Procurement Policy Statement published in February 2025.</p>			
Risk Management:	The strategies help the Council manage risks with relation to its procurement activity. It provides a framework for managing above and below threshold public contracts as defined by the Procurement Act 2023. Risks relating to contracts are managed on an individual basis.			
Property:	N/A			
Policy:	The strategies implement national policy from the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) as set out in the Procurement Act 2023.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:		X		
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A

New Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		As part of the Procurement Strategy new Adult Social Care and Children’s Commissioning Strategies will be developed. Equalities Impact Assessments will be produced as part of each individual commissioning process.
Environmental Impact:	X			Section 5 of the Procurement Strategy-“Embedding sustainability and climate action into all procurement activity” will have a direct impact on the Council meeting PRIORITY AREA 3. Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Health Impact:	X			As part of the Procurement Strategy new Adult Social Care and Children’s Commissioning Strategies will be developed. The aim will be to improve health outcomes.
ICT Impact:	X			The Procurement Strategy looks to develop e procurement, contract management and social value systems that integrate with the Governments Central Digital Platform to meet the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023 and Procurement Regulations 2024
Digital Services Impact:	X			The Procurement Strategy looks to enhance digital services internally and externally to improve efficiency and comply with the Procurement Act 2023
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Both strategies underpin corporate priorities.
Core Business:	X			Whilst much of the Procurement Strategy is core business, good procurement and contract management support the overall delivery of improvement priorities
Data Impact:		X		N/A

Consultation and Engagement:	<p>The strategies have been subject to internal consultation across all service areas. Some amendments have been made as a result of the feedback.</p> <p>External consultation with organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses, the local Chamber of Commerce and relevant VCSE bodies has been undertaken in parallel with the internal consultation.</p> <p>The intention is to launch the strategies at a “Meet the Buyer” event in June.</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The current Procurement Strategy is out of date and does not reflect recent changes to legislation including the Procurement Act 2023 and amendments to the Local Government Act 1988.
- 4.2 The introduction of the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) creates national priorities that need incorporating in any procurement strategy alongside local priorities.
 - delivering value for money
 - maximising public benefit
 - sharing information for the purpose of allowing suppliers and others to understand the authority’s procurement policies and decisions
 - acting, and being seen to act, with integrity; and
 - removing or reducing the barriers faced by SMEs
- 4.3 Amendments to Section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988 (LGA 1988) allow the Council, for the first time, to reserve below threshold contracts (in some circumstance) to local suppliers. The “Think Local” Social Value strategy looks to take advantage of this change to support the local economy whilst still ensuring the Council obtains value for money. This will require a change to the notes to Contract Standing Orders.
- 4.4 The report presents a draft revised Procurement Strategy and a draft “Think Local” Social Value Strategy to Corporate Board

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The report presents a Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy for approval by Executive.

Background

5.2 The Council’s current procurement strategy [Procurement Strategy 2023 to 2027](#) requires updating to reflect legislative change and the Council’s Procurement & Commissioning function revised operating model:-

- The Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) came into force in February 2024 governs all regulated procurement activity. It replaced the Public Contract Regulations 2015, although Council will still need to manage contracts and frameworks procured under the old regime.
- In April 2026 new Contract Standing Orders went live which reflect the new act and the recent restructure of the Procurement & Commissioning (P & C) function
- The P & C function will move away from a traditional category management approach to a business partnering model.
- There will be greater expectations on service areas to manage low value low risk procurement activities, allowing the P & C function to be more strategic in terms of supporting/managing higher value (normally above threshold) higher risk procurements including frameworks and dynamic markets.
- The P & C function will also become a more strategic function regarding contract management to ensure implementation of the new requirements under PA23.

5.3 The new Procurement Strategy (**see Appendix A**) establishes six workstreams each with associated ambitions, outcomes, and activities for the P & C function in the next 3 years. Delivering on the first three priorities will ensure that we achieve our procurement and council aims and ambitions; the second three are the strong enablers that will ensure that we have the tools in place to do so. Under the new operating model, we will have a more devolved procurement structure supported by a stronger professional centre of excellence. Embedding the six priority themes will ensure that procurement activity is robust and consistent across all areas of the council.

- a) **Delivering best value and good governance** is about delivering procurement in line with PA23, the NPPS and other best practices found in the government’s sourcing playbooks.
- b) **Embedding sustainability and climate action into all procurement activity** focuses on supporting the Council’s net zero ambitions, such as measuring and reducing Scope 3 emissions.
- c) **Providing opportunity for economic, social, and environmental wellbeing** is all about Social Value and targeting procurement at local suppliers to maximise the local economic impact. The draft “Think Local” Procurement Policy (**see Appendix B**) highlights the approach the Council is looking to take to simplify its approach to Social Value and to take advantage of changes to Section 17 of the LGA 1988.
- d) **Enhancing the supply market** explains how the Council will work with the supplier market to promote opportunities. The Council will establish a clear procurement pipeline and undertake pre market engagement in line with PA23. The Council will

New Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy

go beyond its legal requirements in promoting lower value contracts to SMEs and VCSEs. *This links in to a key recommendation from the recent Local Government Association Peer Review on Adult Social Care Commissioning.*

- e) **Improving contract and commercial management** is key to ensuring the Council delivers best value services. PA23 is not just about the procurement of goods and services it is about managing the whole contract lifecycle. *This links in to a key recommendation from the recent Local Government Association Peer Review on Adult Social Care Commissioning.*
- f) **Building skills and capability** within the Council is essential to ensure there are appropriate skills and expertise across the Council with the Procurement & Commissioning team (supported by Legal) taking the strategic lead and establishing a centre of excellence. *This links in to a key recommendation from the recent Local Government Association Peer Review on Adult Social Care Commissioning.*

5.4 As highlighted in 5.3 c) above in addition to the Procurement Strategy the Council will establish a separate “Think Local” Social Value Strategy (**see Appendix B**) This will align the Council’s approach with NPPS and create a simpler approach to maximise community benefit. More detailed guidance for officers and suppliers will be developed once the strategy has been agreed.

5.5 The Council will develop a realistic and achievable Delivery Plan (**See Appendix C**) which will include metrics to evaluate the progress of the activities contained in the strategy. The timeframes for delivery will be subject to various factors such as level of appropriate resources, organisational readiness and any changes required to Contract Standing Orders.

5.6 As stated in the Procurement Strategy, The Delivery Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be reported to the Procurement Board for oversight

5.7 Key priorities for 2026/2027 are shown in table below:-

Key Priorities Year 1

4.3.1	Introduce and promote the use of spend analysis in the development of reports, dashboards, business cases across the whole council.
4.3.2	Implement revised gateways and proportionate processes that align to relevant legislation into the governance arrangements to ensure all relevant factors are considered and relevant parties are engaged before decisions are taken.
4.3.4	Establish procurement tools, guidance and methodologies for council officers, ensuring that they can maximise opportunities to deliver best value outcomes throughout the commissioning, procurement and contract management lifecycle.
4.3.5	Introduce new Contract Standing Orders that support compliance with all relevant legislation and ensure effort and resource is focussed on the high-cost and high-risk commercial relationships.

New Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy

6.3.1	Launch a new “Think Local” social value policy and model, including provision of templates, processes and training to all relevant officers.
8.3.1	Introduce a consistent, risk-based contract management framework with accompanying tools, comprehensive training and support for all officers who are involved in managing contracts with third parties.
8.3.2	All key contracts have a named contract manager who has clear responsibilities and understands the contract performance reporting requirements and the importance of developing appropriate relationships with suppliers.

Consultation

- 5.8 Internal feedback has been incorporated into the revised versions of the strategies. Whilst most changes are minor three key change were identified: -
- a) Targeted training for Councillors on public sector procurement
 - b) Support for officers undertaking low value low risk procurement activities inline with the Council’s revised Contract Standing Orders
 - c) Frameworks and approved lists for commonly purchased low value goods & services to ensure the Council obtains value for money from its purchasing power.
- 5.9 Whilst internal consultation took place the Council has been consulting with external stakeholders prior to Executive agreeing the strategies. Consultation is also being undertaken with voluntary sector organisations. A “Meet the Buyer” event will be held in June/July to highlight the practical implications to suppliers.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 No other options have been considered. The Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy set the strategic direction of the Council regarding procurement and complying with relevant legislation.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Executive are asked to adopt the Procurement Strategy and “Think Local” Social Value Strategy.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Equity Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix B – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- 8.3 Appendix C – Draft Procurement Strategy
- 8.4 Appendix D – Draft “Think Local” Social Value Strategy
- 8.5 Appendix E – Delivery Plan

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

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

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council’s position:

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

Name: Richard Howroyd
Job Title: Procurement & Commissioning Lead
Tel No: (01635) 551111 | Ext 3291
E-mail: richard.howroyd1@westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire Council Equity Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE

March 2023

Contents

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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts.....	14
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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Resources – Procurement & Commissioning
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Procurement Strategy & ‘Think Local’ Social Value Policy
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Updates the Procurement Policy and establishes a new policy relating to social value.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	In general, the policy is neutral relating to protective characteristics. It may have positive impacts on deprived communities by creating training and job opportunities as part of suppliers Social Value commitments. It continues to support the Armed Forces Covenant as highlighted by PPN 008: Armed Forces Covenant - GOV.UK
Completed By	R Howroyd
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	7 th April 2026

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The policies ensure we comply with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023 and recent changes to the Local Government Act 1988. There are no direct equalities impacts</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The policies provide clarity on how the Council work with suppliers and implement the Procurement Act 2023.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our</p>	<p>The policy is informed by Government legislation and statutory guidance.</p>

Equity Impact Assessment

ability to deliver our climate commitments.	
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>None. There is a clear need for the Council to establish a new Procurement Strategy and Social Value due to changes in legislation. Individual procurements will still be subject to equality impact assessments.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Value policy can support creation of jobs, training opportunities in the Council's more deprived wards		TBC	TBC
Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Care experienced people	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supports PPN 008: Armed Forces Covenant - GOV.UK			

Section 4: Review

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

Review Date	June 2027
Person Responsible for Review	Richard Howroyd
Authorised By	

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

Appendix B

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Resources
Service:	Procurement & Commissioning
Team:	
Lead Officer:	Richard Howroyd
Title of Project/System:	Procurement Strategy
Date of Assessment:	7/04/2026

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

	Yes	No
<p>Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data?</p> <p><i>Note – sensitive personal data is described as “data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation”</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be processing data on a large scale?</p> <p><i>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension?</p> <p><i>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will any decisions be automated?</p> <p><i>Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Equity Impact Assessment

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

If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

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Procurement Strategy 2026-2031

Document Control

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1. Foreword

- 1.1 There are significant changes in public sector procurement with the UK's Procurement Act 2023 coming into force and the impact of the Provider Selection Regime (on health and some social care), creating the largest overhaul of the public procurement rules for decades. There are likely to be more changes to come. However, along with the challenges, this brings with it the opportunity to ensure our procurement activities are ambitious, robust and fit for purpose, and to take advantage of the new regime.
- 1.2 This strategy sets out the council's guiding principles and ambitions for commissioning & procurement of all goods, services and works. Whether you're a councillor, senior manager or budget holder at the council, or one of our suppliers or partners it will help you understand what the council is aiming to achieve.
- 1.3 The Strategy defines our organisational approach and provides assurance that we will continue to spend public money in a way which is fair, accountable and achieves the very best value.
- 1.4 Our vision is to ensure that all the council's procurement activity is delivered in a manner that considers our guiding principles and ambitions, not only from a procurement perspective but also considering the wider commitments in our Corporate Strategy.
- 1.5 Our procurement activity and decisions have a direct impact on the council's budget, the quality and cost of services to our residents, local businesses and other stakeholders, and delivery of our corporate and service objectives. The way in which we conduct our procurement activity also has an impact on our suppliers and potential suppliers to the council, and we hope that the strategy will enable us to provide greater transparency and consistency in our activities.
- 1.6 There are six priority themes in this strategy; delivering on the first three will ensure that we achieve our procurement and council aims and ambitions; the second three are the strong enablers that will ensure that we have the tools in place to do so. We have a devolved procurement structure and embedding the six priority themes will ensure that procurement activity is robust and consistent across all areas of the council.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 To be agreed

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3. Where does the Council Spend its Money?

- 3.1 The Council spends over £200m per annum on goods, services and works in a wide range of markets. **Appendix 1** provides a breakdown of influenceable spend in recent years. It covers both revenue and capital expenditure.
- 3.2 It should be noted that in some cases non influenceable spend is shown, such as directly transferring grants from central government to providers for example Nursery Grants or disability access grants.
- 3.3 Redacted data relates to payments to individual for example, direct payments for adult or children's social care.
- 3.4 West Berkshire is the lead for Social Care community equipment for the whole of Berkshire spending approximately £13.5m per annum.

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4. Delivering best value and good governance

4.1 Ambition

- 4.1.1 Delivering best value¹ is at the heart of procurement and is of critical importance within the wider context of financial challenges and increased demand for services within local government. Achieving best value is not just about efficiency, savings and managing risk but is also around the delivery of wider public good. The council must also pay attention to its obligations under the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) which may change over time, for example the original NPPS was focused on COVID recovery.
- 4.1.2 The Council must manage increasing commercial risk based on world events. The operating environment for local authorities has shifted significantly in recent years because of wider geo-political events, meaning less surety in the outcome of commercial contracting and greater financial risks.
- 4.1.3 The council must ensure that procurement is robustly planned, to deliver the desired outcomes, deliver best value and take advantage of collaborative opportunities available to us.
- 4.1.4 Strong governance processes will ensure appropriate oversight of the council's procurement activity, alignment with the Corporate Strategy, adherence to relevant legislation and the council's own Contract Standing Orders

4.2 Outcomes

- 4.2.1 The expertise of the Procurement & Commissioning Team is focussed on high value, high risk procurement activity, working with services across the council.
- 4.2.2 Training, guidance, frameworks and approved lists will be put in place to allow increased self-service for commonly purchased lower value goods & services which ensure the council continues to obtain value for money by using its purchasing power.
- 4.2.3 Council contracts are awarded and managed to optimise council funding, considering cost, delivery and whole life benefits.
- 4.2.4 High quality spend data is used to inform our procurement pipeline and current contracting in an appropriate and proportionate manner.
- 4.2.5 Internal processes, procedures and Contract Standing Orders are optimised and efficient, enabling the council to procure effectively.
- 4.2.6 Opportunities to collaborate with other local authorities and public bodies are explored and taken where appropriate.
- 4.2.7 Improved visibility and transparency of council procurement options and decisions, to increase the opportunity for scrutiny and market engagement

4.3 Activities

- 4.3.1 Introduce and promote the use of spend analysis in the development of reports, dashboards, business cases across the whole council.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-value-standards-and-intervention-a-statutory-guide-for-best-value-authorities/best-value-standards-and-intervention-a-statutory-guide-for-best-value-authorities>

- 4.3.2 Implement revised gateways and proportionate processes that align to relevant legislation into the governance arrangements to ensure all relevant factors are considered and relevant parties are engaged before decisions are taken.
- 4.3.3 Work with local partners, neighbouring councils and other public bodies to develop and deliver collaborative purchasing arrangements with outcomes recorded.
- 4.3.4 Establish procurement tools, guidance and methodologies for council officers, ensuring that they can maximise opportunities to deliver best value outcomes throughout the commissioning, procurement and contract management lifecycle.
- 4.3.5 Introduce new Contract Standing Orders that support compliance with all relevant legislation and ensure effort and resource is focussed on the high-cost and high-risk commercial relationships.

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5. Embedding sustainability and climate action into all procurement activity

5.1 Ambition

- 5.1.1 West Berkshire Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and updated its Environment Strategy in 2025 with a focus on embedding sustainability in the corporate Strategy. A key ambition within the Environment Strategy is to achieve Net Zero by 2030 for council-controlled activities. In parallel, we will continue to work with partners and communities to get the wider district to Net Zero at the earliest practicable time.
- 5.1.2 The council's spending can have a significant impact on helping the council to achieve its carbon net zero ambitions, influencing the approach to climate change mitigation and driving sustainability within the local authority area and beyond. Whilst we have made progress, we must try to do more.
- 5.1.3 The council's approach to procurement and contract management must be harnessed to support the council's strategy.
- 5.1.4 Our decisions about what we buy, who we buy it from and the way we buy it can have significant wider environmental, economic and social impacts, thereby contribute to achieving one of the council's core policies: tackling the climate and ecological emergency (Priority 3).

5.2 Outcomes

- 5.2.1 The climate and sustainability impact of the council's spending decisions are fully considered and appropriately built into procurement requirements, driving down carbon emissions and contributing towards the net zero ambition.
- 5.2.2 Measurable sustainability and climate data is available in contracts and is used to improve services and drive change.
- 5.2.3 Council contracts consider the changing climate and takes action to reduce detrimental impacts, influencing emission reductions from outsourced and contracted council services.
- 5.2.4 A supply base that is aware of and embraces the council's declarations, policy and strategy in relation to sustainability, passing that commitment on to other organisations and supporting delivery of a Greener and more sustainable West Berkshire

5.3 Activities

- 5.3.1 Explore the establishment of a methodology for measuring and reporting of climate and sustainability targets and impacts during contract delivery, creating data that can be used to improve services and drive change, including (but not limited to) utilising the existing baseline data for Scope 3 emissions.
- 5.3.2 Engage with the Environment Delivery team to provide expertise to service teams in procurements and ensure standard documentation contains minimum standards for supplying to the council.
- 5.3.3 Develop and deploy workable models in conjunction with the Environment Delivery team for use in procurement evaluations to allow assessment of climate and sustainability issues. The Council has already determined that projects above £100,000 in value should complete the Sustainable Assessment Tool (SAT) as part of the governance process. This will help senior leaders and project teams to assess whether their projects or activities are achieving the most practicable environmental benefits and are suitably mitigating any adverse impacts. The use of the SAT can be further embedded into the Council's procurement processes, so that potential suppliers can give greater consideration to the environmental and social impacts associated with the sourcing and use of their goods and services.

- 5.3.4 As part of our market engagement activities and plans, we will work with our supply markets to ensure they are aware of our ambitions and share knowledge about what constitutes current sustainability best practice.
- 5.3.5 We will ensure that the achievement of sustainability and environmental objectives by suppliers is continually tracked as part of benefits realisation and lessons learned exercises linked to projects and procurements. Historically, there can be a gap between what tenderers propose as “added value” and what is delivered after contract award.
- 5.3.6 Create a database of case studies of suppliers who are exemplars for delivering positive environmental outcomes, especially where these are over and above their core contracted services and responsibilities. These suppliers will be highlighted within internal and external communications, where appropriate. The celebration of good practice will hopefully inspire other suppliers to learn from and hopefully match these aspirations.

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6. Providing opportunity for economic, social and environmental wellbeing

6.1 Ambition

- 6.1.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 was enacted to ensure public sector organisations are taking the social, economic and environmental value delivered by their contracts into account.
- 6.1.2 The Act places a duty on the council to "consider, prior to undertaking the procurement/ commissioning process, how any services procured might improve economic, social and environmental well-being".
- 6.1.3 Whilst we operate in a challenging environment, in which savings will always be a factor for consideration, we need a strategy which also focuses on achieving additional outcomes from our procurement activity, at no extra cost.
- 6.1.4 By leveraging our expenditure and engaging with suppliers we can help the council enhance outcomes for our communities through increased social, economic and environmental value. The NPPS places further obligations on contracting authorities such as West Berkshire to seek both social and economic value through its contracting arrangements.
- 6.1.5 Changes to section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988 (LGA 1988) will also allow some contracts to be restricted to local VSCs and SMEs to boost the local economy.
- 6.1.6 Aligning the council's procurement activity to the social value requirements will directly support the overall priorities of the council as set out in the Corporate Strategy.

6.2 Outcomes

- 6.2.1 A proportionate and effective "Think Local" Social Value policy, with supporting methodology/toolkit, is embedded across the council.
- 6.2.2 The council can record and track Social Value outcomes delivered through contracts with third parties.
- 6.2.3 Procurement processes consistently consider Social Value and are designed to ensure suppliers make worthwhile and deliverable Social Value commitments through the tender process.
- 6.2.4 The council seeks to improve economic, social and environmental wellbeing from our contracts, over and above the delivery of the services directly required by exploring how those activities can deliver the council's wider strategic outcomes at no extra cost.
- 6.2.5 Expenditure on contracts is leveraged, and suppliers are engaged to enhance our communities through increased social value.

6.3 Activities

- 6.3.1 Launch a new "Think Local" social value policy and model, including provision of templates, processes and training to all relevant officers.
- 6.3.2 Implement a clear impact measurement mechanism, for delivery of Social Value and wellbeing outcomes and impact to be reported on.
- 6.3.3 Ensure that Social Value is built into Contract Management processes, so that commitments made by suppliers during tender processes are delivered during the contract term.
- 6.3.4 Explicitly link Social Value to the Corporate Strategy to create a clear strategic link between council aims and outcomes, including (but not limited to) consideration of the efforts to reduce health inequalities.

7. Enhancing the supply market

7.1 Ambition

- 7.1.1 West Berkshire's spends over £200m each year We must ensure we have a market that can deliver current as well as future needs.
- 7.1.2 We recognise the importance of a supply market that has developed to meet our needs and understand that by directing spend effectively and engaging with the market appropriately we can help the market grow and create a vibrant and sustainable marketplace who can create innovative and lasting service solutions.
- 7.1.3 We will seek to maximise the benefit offered by our local supply base, supporting our Corporate and Economic Strategies.

7.2 Outcomes

- 7.2.1 All suppliers can access opportunities to apply to work for the council if they wish to do so.
- 7.2.2 The council works with our local supply market, helping to develop "a prosperous new economy", in support of the council's Economic Strategy and to support delivery of the council's sustainability targets, seeking to take advantage of legislation updates where appropriate.
- 7.2.3 The market has early visibility of upcoming opportunities and a good understanding of how they access these opportunities.
- 7.2.4 Supplier markets are appropriately engaged during the pre-tender phase, allowing input and development of Commissioning and Procurement Plans and encouraging innovation that drives best value.
- 7.2.5 The council engages with, and influences, the market and potential suppliers to drive innovation and develop new ideas around service delivery.

7.3 Activities

- 7.3.1 West Berkshire will regularly update and publish a pipeline of upcoming procurement opportunities and work with partners such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the council's Business and Skills Team to raise awareness across the market.
- 7.3.2 Services will ensure an appropriate level of early market engagement is included in projects when developing Commissioning and Procurement Plans.
- 7.3.3 We will conduct a review of business case and procurement documentation & processes to ensure suitability for all markets and suppliers.
- 7.3.4 We will assess and review West Berkshire's engagement with supplier groups, including but not limited to SME and VCSE organisations, to develop an action plan for improved market access.
- 7.3.5 We will analyse and assess the council's supply base to understand market pressures and composition.
- 7.3.6 Maximise the opportunities offered by the PA23 and amendments to LGA1988 in respect of engaging and using the local supply market where appropriate
- 7.3.7 The Council will develop Adult Social Care and Children's Commissioning Strategies that reflect the relevant markets and the needs of service users

8. Improving contract and commercial management

8.1 Ambition

- 8.1.1 Many of the council's key services are delivered by third party suppliers. It is therefore vitally important to effectively manage these commercial relationships, ensuring that the organisation delivers better services, mitigates risk and has improved control over costs.
- 8.1.2 Failure to manage contracts properly may lead to inefficiencies, poor contractor performance or commercial failure which can seriously damage the council's reputation and ability to deliver effective services, support our communities and deliver against our corporate ambitions and priorities.
- 8.1.3 We will embed improved contract management throughout the contract lifecycle, providing the framework and tools to comply with the PA23 and to manage the exposure to commercial, contractual and reputational risk.

8.2 Outcomes

- 8.2.1 Contracts with third parties are robustly and proportionately managed by the council, using an established and consistent corporate approach to contract management which includes the tiering of suppliers.
- 8.2.2 A contract management framework THAT improves contract management across the council with clear lines of reporting and responsibility, ensuring that contracts are delivering or exceeding their quality, service and cost targets.
- 8.2.3 There is visibility of contract performance in relation to the council's key contracts and improved assurance on delivery.
- 8.2.4 Contracts are proactively managed to ensure that the value negotiated through the procurement process is retained, continuous improvement is realised, and additional value is unlocked where possible.

8.3 Activities

- 8.3.1 Introduce a consistent, risk-based contract management framework with accompanying tools, comprehensive training and support for all officers who are involved in managing contracts with third parties.
- 8.3.2 All key contracts have a named contract manager who has clear responsibilities and understands the contract performance reporting requirements and the importance of developing appropriate relationships with suppliers.
- 8.3.3 Contracts are based on terms and conditions which allow for appropriate and proactive contract management.
- 8.3.4 Ensure that data on contract performance is reported on corporately for the council's key contracts.
- 8.3.5 Introduce a consistent approach to commercial risk management using established tools and techniques.

9. Building skills and capability

9.1 **Ambition**

- 9.1.1 Public procurement is a skills and knowledge grounded discipline which requires regular development to maintain an up-to-date skill set. We will ensure that procurement officers have the right skills and capabilities to support the council appropriately and effectively.
- 9.1.2 The Procurement & Commissioning Team will provide advice, guidance and supporting documentation to increase procurement and contract management skills and knowledge levels across the council, improving our overall compliance, governance and contracting strategies.
- 9.1.3 As procurement will be increasingly undertaken by officers outside the Procurement & Commissioning team, appropriate skills and understanding must be shared and developed across the council.
- 9.1.4 Councillors understand their role in procurement and commissioning process and the complexity of Public Sector procurement legislation.

9.2 **Outcomes**

- 9.2.1 The council is supported by a skilled and knowledgeable Procurement & Commissioning Team who can offer support, advice and guidance on procurement activity.
- 9.2.2 Officers influencing procurement outside of the Procurement & Commissioning Team are appropriately trained and can access guidance, documentation, templates, training and advice to support their procurement activity.
- 9.2.3 The Procurement & Commissioning Team have a clear understanding of their capabilities and development plans in place to support ongoing development of technical skills.
- 9.2.4 The organisation has a good understanding of the Procurement Act 2023 (and where appropriate the Provider Selection Regime), can harness the opportunities presented by the legislation and has embedded the requirements across the organisation.
- 9.2.5 Officers involved in procurement and contract management activity apply a commercial mindset, harnessing opportunities to secure best value and maximise added value in contractual relationships.
- 9.2.6 Councillors have a clear role in the procurement process and understand the constraints in the legislation.

9.3 **Activities**

- 9.3.1 Develop clear multi-year training & development plans for the Procurement & Commissioning Team.
- 9.3.2 A full suite of guidance, templates, advice and training is developed and made easily available for council officer use.
- 9.3.3 Training is provided to Councillors on procurement and Contract Standing Orders
- 9.3.4 Procurement & Commissioning Team members keep fully abreast of the Procurement PA23 changes, become familiar with the new requirements and can provide support and guidance across the organisation to ensure we maximise the opportunities and meet the various requirements of the legislation.
- 9.3.5 Consider the impact of any changes to the organisation's commissioning approach and structure, and the subsequent implications in respect of procurement related skills and capability.

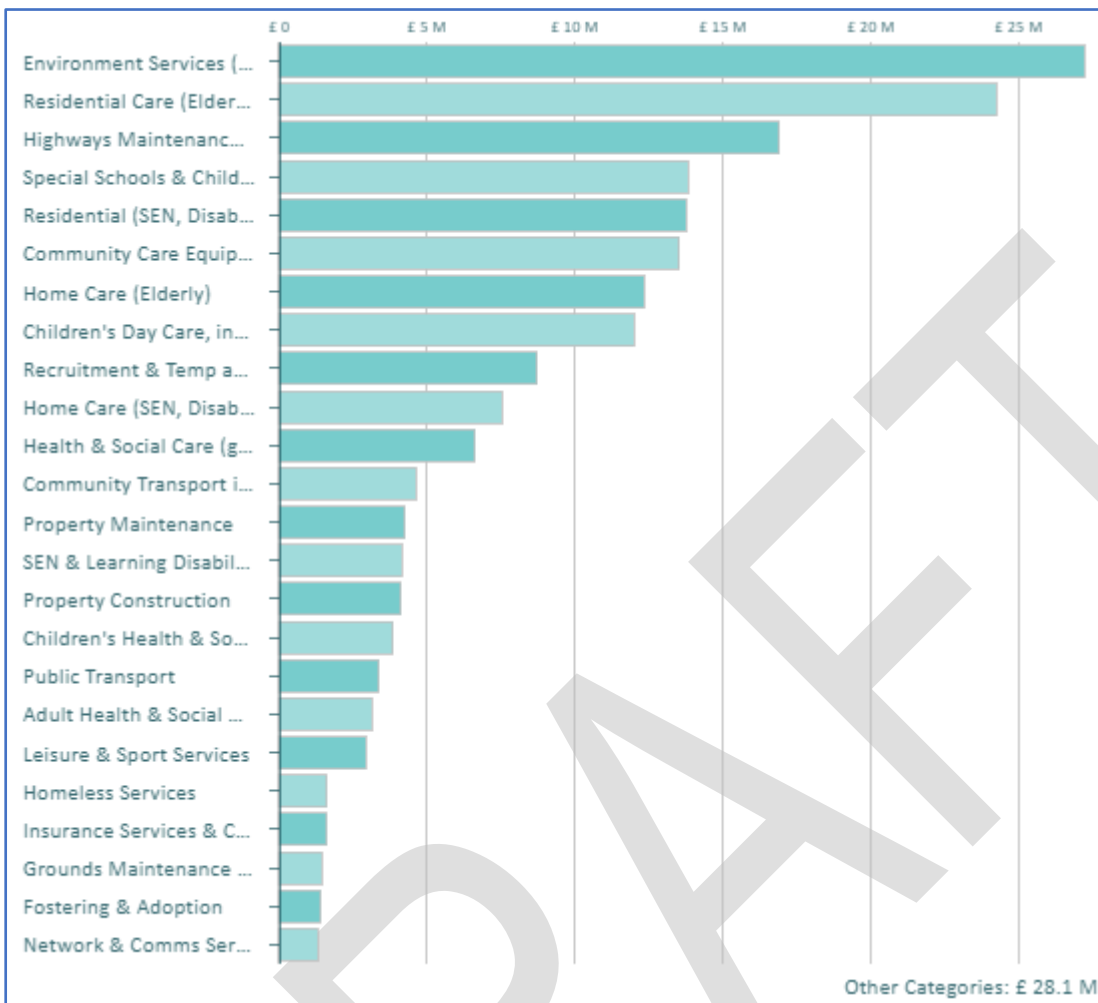
10 Implementing, monitoring and tracking progress of delivery

- 10.1 We will develop a realistic and achievable Delivery Plan which will include metrics to evaluate the progress of the activities contained in the strategy. The timeframes for delivery will be subject to various factors such as level of appropriate resources and organisational readiness.
- 10.2 The Delivery Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be reported to the Procurement Board for oversight.

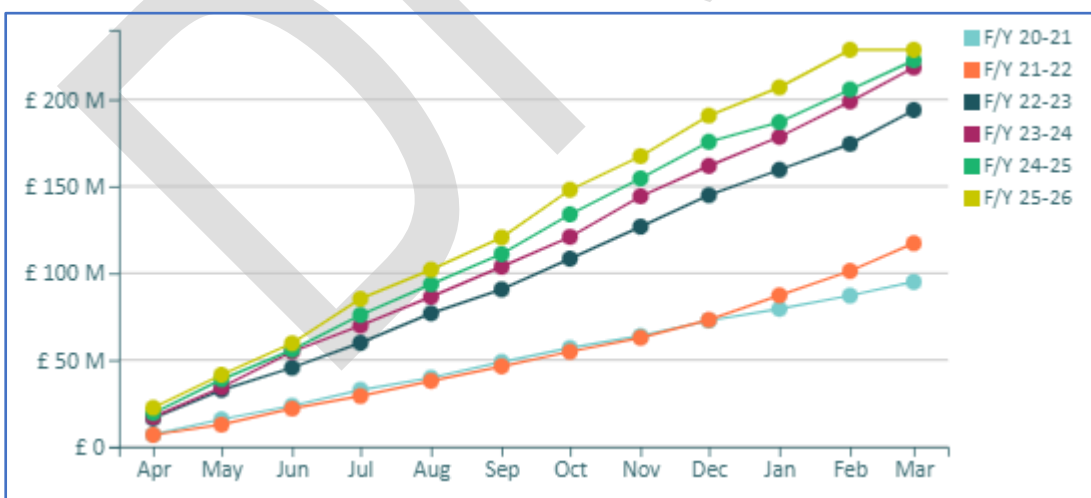
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Appendix 1 Analysis of Influenceable Contract Spend

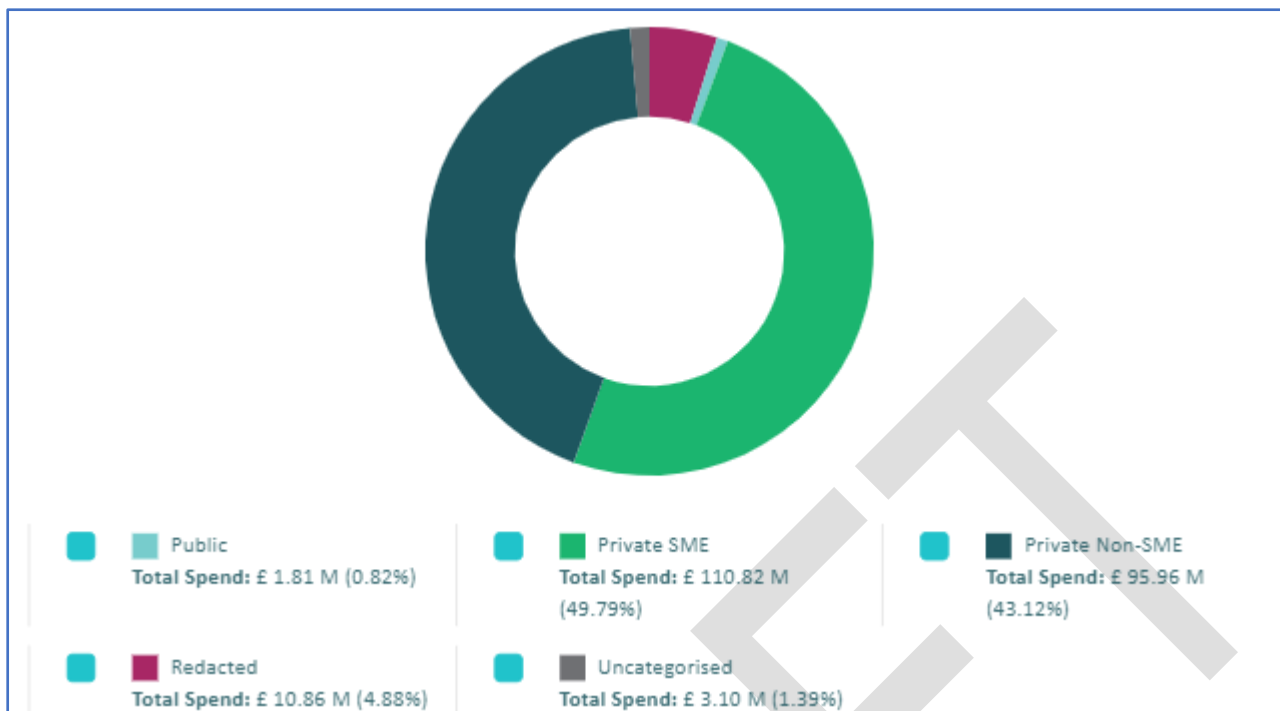
Spend by Category 2024/25



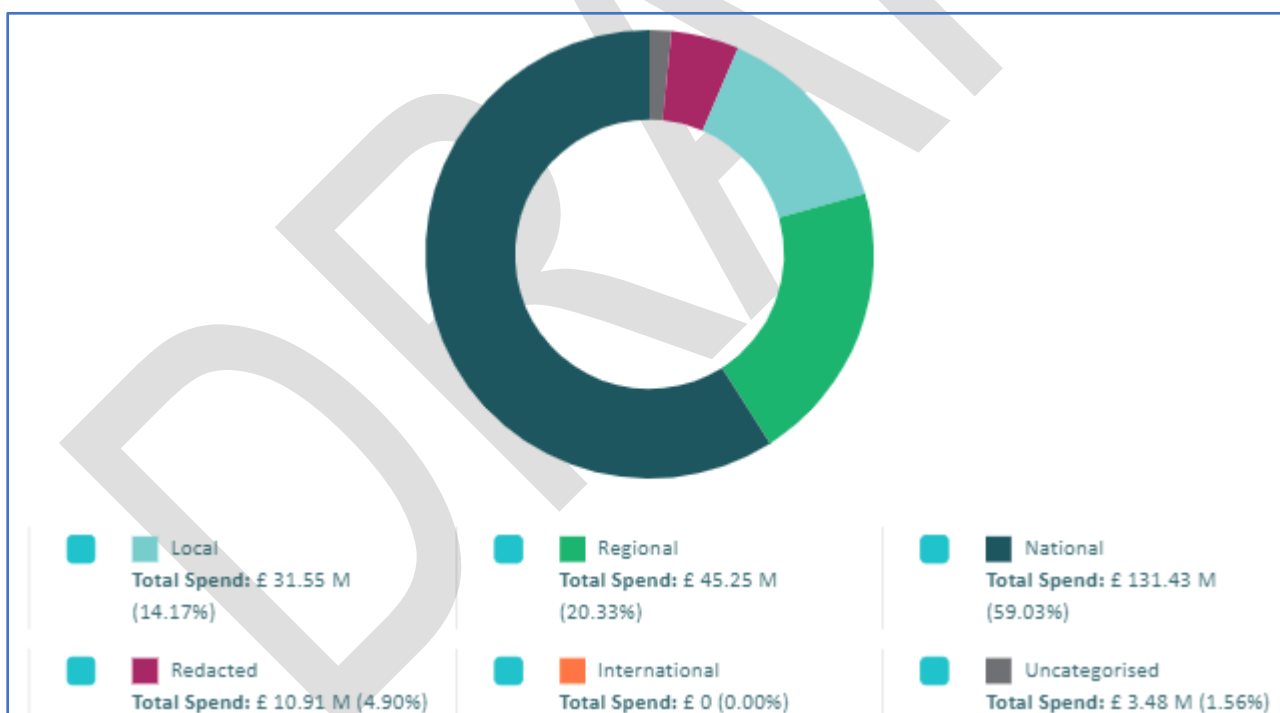
Spend 2021 to 2026



Supplier Size 2024/25



Supplier Region 2024/25



“Think Local Social” Value Strategy

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1. Introduction

1.1 West Berkshire Council is committed to using its procurement spend beyond the direct delivery of services to benefit the local community. It can do this in two ways:

- Spending with local companies especially Small & Medium Size Enterprises (SM's) and Voluntary Community & Social Enterprises (VCSEs) and creating a multiplier effect on the local economy.
- Establishing Social Value obligations on organisation that are awarded contracts by the Council to generate wider public benefits

2. Statutory Basis – Procurement Act 2023

2.1 Public sector procurement is regulated by the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23). There are some exemptions, for example certain health and care contracts which fall under The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 (PSR) or requirements that are so innovative there is currently no market to provide them.

2.2 When carrying out a procurement, contracting authorities such as West Berkshire Council must have regard to the following objectives set out in the Act

- delivering value for money
- maximising public benefit
- sharing information for the purpose of allowing suppliers and others to understand the authority's procurement policies and decisions
- acting, and being seen to act, with integrity; and
- removing or reducing the barriers faced by SMEs

2.3 This strategy forms an important part in meeting these objectives, in particular around public benefit and removing and reducing the barriers faced by SMEs.

3. Statutory Basis – Local Spend

3.1 The ability of councils to use local spend as a tool for the benefit of the local community has been significantly restricted by legislation in particular Section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988 (LGA1988), however this has now been amended to remove many of the obstacles and the conflict that has been created with PA23 which unlike the wider public sector prevents local government from using all aspects of the Act.

3.2 West Berkshire Council can now restrict contracts that are below threshold (see **Appendix A**) to within local authority boundaries or a defined local area if collaborating with neighbouring authorities (see **Appendix B**). The Council must still be able demonstrate value for money and that it has not restricted competition in a way as to give a supplier an undue advantage i.e. restricting so there is only one supplier and awarding the contract by direct award.

4. Statutory Basis - Social Value

- 4.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (SV Act) requires public bodies to consider social value for above threshold services contracts. This requires all public sector organisations and their suppliers to look beyond the financial cost of a contract to consider how the services they commission and procure can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of an area.
- 4.2 The National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) set out the Government's strategic priorities for public procurement in support of the Government's missions. The NPPS focuses on mission-led procurement to unlock the full potential of public procurement to deliver value for money, economic growth and social value.
- 4.3 The NPPS provides a useful definition of Social Value:- "Providing social value through procurement is the additional social, economic or environmental benefit that can be derived from the way a supplier works with its staff, suppliers, community or the environment when delivering a contract"
- 4.4 The NPPS is supported by Procurement Policy Note 02 (PPN02) that mandates a minimum of 10% Social Value for in scope (central government) organisations. The Council is not an in-scope authority for the purpose of PPN02 but can still use it as guidance.
- 4.5 In carrying out a procurement covered by PA23, the Council must have regard to the importance of delivering value for money. Achieving value for money is always the overarching priority in public procurement. This must include consideration of outcomes and quality to avoid waste from low value, poor quality bids. This means optimising the use of public funds by balancing effectiveness, efficiency and economy over the life-cycle of a product, service or works to achieve the intended outcomes of the procurement. This includes wider socio-economic and environmental benefits and impacts.

5. The Council's Approach - Why Should We Think Local?

- 5.1 Buying goods and services, is a vital element of the UK economy. Most economic activity occurs between businesses, and with the public sector. Public sector procurement accounting for nearly £400 billion of spend each year. West Berkshire on its own spends over £200m per year.
- 5.2 It gives government (including local government) the opportunity to support and maintain economic activity and if used strategically, can strengthen domestic supply chains and foster innovation across industries. Procurement that is open to the widest possible range of businesses encourages innovation, higher quality and value for money.
- 5.3 For many businesses, a public sector contract provides the critical opportunity they need to invest, expand their operations, and thrive. Such expenditure is not just an operational cost for Government, but a direct injection of capital and confidence into the business community. Ensuring this opportunity is accessible to businesses of all sizes is therefore a key challenge for economic policy.

6. The Council's Approach Spend with SMEs drives local growth

- 6.1 Beyond the direct benefits to individual firms, directing public spending towards small businesses delivers significant wider economic advantages for local communities. Research has demonstrated a powerful local multiplier effect: for every £1 spent with SMEs by public bodies, an additional 63p is generated for the local economy, compared to just 40p for every £1 spent with a larger UK business, and minimal benefit for overseas spend. Public sector work acts as a “growth accelerator”, enabling businesses to invest, develop new products, and create more jobs within their local community.
- 6.2 SMEs bring operational advantages rooted in their local presence. They often possess a deep understanding of the local culture and the specific needs of their operating areas, allowing them to deliver more bespoke and specialised services. Their smaller structure also makes them inherently more agile, allowing for greater flexibility in their response to changing requirements.
- 6.3 This agility is often paired with deep expertise. Many SMEs are highly specialised, concentrating their resources and knowledge on a single product, service, or niche. This focus can result in greater efficiencies and a higher level of quality than might be found in a larger, more diversified supplier, providing the public sector with access to new innovations, and best-in-class solutions.
- 6.4 Engaging local SMEs can also make a direct contribution to the public sector's net zero goals. Sourcing goods and services from nearby businesses reduces transportation costs and significantly cuts the carbon footprint associated with long-distance freight. This alignment with strategic national goals is another key dimension of the value SMEs provide.
- 6.5 Taken together, these factors demonstrate that procuring from small businesses is not just about supporting enterprise but about making a strategic investment in stronger communities. The benefits range from measurable economic returns and job creation to enhanced social value, greater responsiveness, and improved environmental outcomes, representing a more effective and holistic use of public funds.

7. What will West Berkshire Council Do?

- We will set ambitious annual targets for spending with local SMEs and VCSEs
- We will run regular meet the buyer events either online or in person to provide information on the Council's procurement pipeline and any other opportunities.
- We will use pre market engagement to ensure that SMEs and VSCEs understand our requirements and can feedback on the specification and process
- We will look to keep the procurement process as simple as possible depending on the market and our requirements
- As part of the business case for any below threshold procurements the Council will consider ringfencing the procurement process to local suppliers in line with the PA23 and LGA1988.

- Where possible we will use outcomes-based specifications that will allow SMEs and VCSEs to bring innovative solutions to the table rather than traditional input-based specification that may limit the marketplace.
- We will support local SMEs and VCSEs registering on the Council's E Procurement Portal and on the government's Central Digital Platform.
- We will establish a list of approved local suppliers

8. Why is Social Value important?

- 8.1 Social value is a key method of maximising public benefits and will form an important part of all procurement activities in West Berkshire and we will expect all suppliers and providers we work with to make social value commitments. The Council will aim to keep things simple to encourage local SMEs and VCSEs to want to work with us.
- 8.2 We expect any Social Value to be created locally. Most SMEs contribute to social value in their default operations, for example by employing those furthest from the labour force or contributing to local community initiatives. Their commitment to the communities in which they live and work makes them natural partners in improving local economic and social well-being.

9. What will West Berkshire Council Do?

- The Council will incorporate a minimum of 10% social value in the Price/Quality assessment for all contracts above the relevant procurement threshold when assessing tenders; however, the actual percentage will be market dependent. **Appendix C** outlines the tender process.
- For below threshold contracts and one-off purchases, the Council will seek proportionate contractual commitment where it is appropriate or relevant to the goods and services being purchased.
- The Council will provide training to local SMEs and VCSEs on social value to allow them to maximise their offer
- The Council will establish local Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOM's) to ensure that Social Value can be assessed in line with its Corporate Strategy
- The Council will identify projects where suppliers can make social value commitments
- The Council will relaunch its Social Value Grants Fund linked to a new internet based Social Value platform – The platform is yet to be confirmed.

Appendix A Summary of threshold amounts from 1 January 2026

Contract for the supply of goods, services or works to a sub-central government authority	£207,720
Works contract	£5,193,000
Light touch contract	£663,540
Concession contract	£5,193,000
Light touch contract that is a concession contract	£5,372,609

Note there are no threshold under the Provider Selection Regime – Social Value will be considered in line with statutory guidance [NHS England » The Provider Selection Regime: statutory guidance](#)

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Appendix B Definition of Local Area from Statutory Guidance

- where there is one relevant authority which intends to enter into a relevant contract:
 - i. the area of that authority, or
 - ii. the area of that authority and any of the areas of the counties or London boroughs that border that area
- where there are two or more relevant authorities intending to enter into a relevant contract:
 - i. the areas of those authorities, or
 - ii. the areas of those authorities, and any of the areas of the counties or London boroughs that border those areas

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Appendix C Procurement Process

1. Commissioning / procurement need identified

The Council identifies a service, works or goods requirement and considers how spend can deliver wider community benefits alongside core delivery.

(TOMs: Policy & Strategy alignment) – Social value priorities set in line with local strategy and NPPS.

2. Social value outcomes defined

Desired outcomes are agreed at the outset (for example):

- Local employment and skills
- Environmental sustainability
- Inclusive growth / SME engagement
- Community wellbeing

This ensures social value is **purpose-led**, not generic.

(TOMs: Themes & Outcomes) – Selection of relevant TOM themes (e.g. Jobs, Environment, Equality).

3. Social value built into the contract

The outcomes are embedded into:

- Service specification
- Award criteria and scoring
- Contract conditions

This makes social value **contractual**, not voluntary.

(TOMs: How the contract will deliver) – Outcomes and measures embedded in specification and award criteria.

4. Supplier bids with social value commitments

Bidders respond with:

- Method statements
- Commitments and activities
- Measurable targets

Suppliers explain *how* they will deliver social value through the contract.

(TOMs: Method & Targets) – Bidders propose credible, measurable TOMs responses.



5. Contract awarded

Social value commitments are evaluated and weighted as part of the overall scoring, influencing award decisions.

(TOMs: Evaluation & Weighting)– Social value TOMs scored and influence the award decision.



6. Contract delivery

Suppliers deliver both:

- Core service outcomes
- Social value activities (e.g. apprenticeships, carbon reduction initiatives)

(TOMs: Delivery of commitments) – Suppliers deliver activities linked to TOMs commitments.

7. Monitoring and reporting

During delivery:

- KPIs and measures are tracked
- Evidence is collected
- Performance is reviewed through contract management

This step is critical to avoid “paper promises”.

(TOMs: Measures & reporting) – Contract management uses TOMs metrics and evidence.



8. Social value outcomes achieved

Tangible impacts are realised, such as:

- Jobs created
- Skills developed
- Emission reductions
- Community benefits delivered

(TOMs: Outcomes & Impact) – Tangible social, environmental and economic benefits realised.



9. Learning and improvement

Lessons learned inform:

- Future commissioning strategies
- Improved specifications
- More targeted social value outcomes

This feeds back into Step 2, creating **continuous improvement**.

(TOMs: Continuous improvement) – Lessons learned feed back into outcome selection and TOMs use.

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Appendix E Delivery Plan

		2026/2027				2027/2028				2028/2029				2029/2030				2030/2031			
		Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Delivering best value and good governance																					
4.3.1	Introduce and promote the use of spend analysis in the development of reports, dashboards, business cases across the whole council.			Implement	Business As Usual																
4.3.2	Implement revised gateways and proportionate processes that align to relevant legislation into the governance arrangements to ensure all relevant factors are considered and relevant parties are engaged before decisions are taken.			Implement			Review				Review				Review					Review	
4.3.3	Work with local partners, neighbouring councils and other public bodies to develop and deliver collaborative purchasing arrangements with outcomes recorded.	Business As Usual																			
4.3.4	Establish procurement tools, guidance and methodologies for council officers, ensuring that they can maximise opportunities to deliver best value outcomes throughout the commissioning, procurement and contract management lifecycle.			Implement			Review				Review				Review					Review	
4.3.5	Introduce new Contract Standing Orders that support compliance with all relevant legislation and ensure effort and resource is focussed on the high-cost and high-risk commercial relationships.	Implement Revised CSO's	Undertake Full Review	Implement						Review				Review					Review		

Appendix C Delivery Plan

		2026/2027				2027/2028				2028/2029				2029/2030				2030/2031			
		Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
	Embedding sustainability and climate action into all procurement activity																				
5.3.1	Explore the establishment of a methodology for measuring and reporting of climate and sustainability targets and impacts during contract delivery, creating data that can be used to improve services and drive change, including (but not limited to) utilising the existing baseline data for Scope 3 emissions.					Implement						Review				Review				Review	
5.3.2	Engage with the Sustainable Economy team to provide expertise to service teams in procurements and ensure standard documentation contains minimum standards for supplying to the council					Implement	Incorporate in Business as Usual														
5.3.3	Develop and deploy workable models in conjunction with the Sustainable Economy team for use in procurement evaluations to allow assessment of climate and sustainability issues.					Implement	Incorporate in Business as Usual														
5.3.4	As part our market engagement activities and plans we will work with our supply markets to ensure they are aware of our ambitions and learn from them what constitutes current sustainability best practice.	Implement	Incorporate in Business as Usual																		

Appendix C Delivery Plan

		2026/2027				2027/2028				2028/2029				2029/2030				2030/2031			
		Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Delivering best value and good governance																					
6.3.1	Launch a new "Think Local" social value policy and model, including provision of templates, processes and training to all relevant officers.	Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review			
6.3.2	Implement a clear impact measurement mechanism, for delivery of Social Value and wellbeing outcomes and impact to be reported on.				Implement			Review				Review				Review					Review
6.3.3	Ensure that Social Value is built into Contract Management processes, so that commitments made by suppliers during tender processes are delivered during the contract term.					Implement				Review				Review				Review			
6.3.4	Explicitly link Social Value to the Corporate Strategy to create a clear strategic link between council aims and outcomes, including (but not limited to) consideration of the efforts to reduce health inequalities.					Implement Subject to Review of Corporate Strategy															

Appendix C Delivery Plan

		2026/2027				2027/2028				2028/2029				2029/2030				2030/2031			
		Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Enhancing the supply market																					
7.3.1	West Berkshire will regularly update and publish a pipeline of upcoming procurement opportunities and work with partners such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the council's Business and Skills Team to raise awareness across the market.	Annual				Annual				Annual				Annual				Annual			
7.3.2	Services will ensure an appropriate level of early market engagement is included in projects when developing Commissioning and Procurement Plans.	Incorporate Business As Usual																			
7.3.3	We will conduct a review of business case and procurement documentation & processes to ensure suitability for all markets and suppliers.			Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review	
7.3.4	We will assess and review West Berkshire's engagement with supplier groups, including but not limited to SME and VCSE organisations, to develop an action plan for improved market access.				Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review
7.3.5	We will analyse and assess the council's supply base to understand market pressures and composition.			Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review	
7.3.6	Maximise the opportunities offered by the PA23 and amendments to LGA1988 in respect of engaging and using the local supply market where appropriate	Incorporate in Business As Usual																			
7.3.7	The Council will develop an Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy that reflect the needs of service users		Implement					Review				Review				Review				Review	

Appendix C Delivery Plan

		2026/2027				2027/2028				2028/2029				2029/2030				2030/2031			
		Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
	Improving contract and commercial management																				
8.3.1	Introduce a consistent, risk-based contract management framework with accompanying tools, comprehensive training and support for all officers who are involved in managing contracts with third parties.			Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review	
8.3.2	All key contracts have a named contract manager who has clear responsibilities and understands the contract performance reporting requirements and the importance of developing appropriate relationships with suppliers.		Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review		
8.3.3	Contracts are based on terms and conditions which allow for appropriate and proactive contract management.				Implement						Review				Review				Review		
8.3.4	Ensure that data on contract performance is reported on corporately for the council's key contracts.						Implement				Review				Review				Review		
8.3.5	Introduce a consistent approach to commercial risk management using established tools and techniques				Implement				Review				Review				Review				

Appendix C Delivery Plan

		2026/2027				2027/2028				2028/2029				2029/2030				2030/2031			
		Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4	Qtr1	Qtr2	Qtr3	Qtr4
Building skills and capability																					
8.9.1	Develop clear multi-year training & development plans for the Procurement & Commissioning Team.			Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review	
8.9.2	A full suite of guidance, templates, advice and training is developed and made easily available for council officer use.			Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review	
8.9.3	Procurement & Commissioning Team members keep fully abreast of the Procurement PA23 changes, become familiar with the new requirements and can provide support and guidance across the organisation to ensure we maximise the opportunities and meet the various requirements of the legislation.			Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review	
8.9.4	Consider the impact of any changes to the organisation's commissioning approach and structure, and the subsequent implications in respect of procurement related skills and capability			Implement				Review				Review				Review				Review	

All Age Autism Strategy 2026-2029

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	11 June 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Patrick Clark
Report Author:	Hannah Cole

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to publish the All-Age Autism Strategy, a key document that outlines the council’s commitment to ensuring that people living with autism in the district can lead rewarding and fulfilling lives, and that they, their families, and their carers receive the support they need.
- 1.2 Autism spans a person’s entire life journey, and this strategy aims to improve outcomes for children and young people. The council will work collaboratively with its partners and with the autistic community in West Berkshire to achieve this.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the attached strategy is adopted.

3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are limited costs linked to the implementation of the strategy. Those costs are already in relevant budget plans.
Human Resource:	Officer time will be required to take forward implementation.
Legal:	The Care Act 2014 mandates that local authorities in England prioritize the wellbeing, prevention of needs, and independent living of autistic adults and their carers. Key duties include assessing needs regardless of eligibility, providing information and advocacy, and supporting carers through assessments and personalized care plans.

	<p>The adoption of the strategy will support compliance with those Care Act duties.</p> <p>Under the Children Act 1989 (specifically amendments made by the Children and Families Act 2014), local authorities have a legal duty to carry out a Parent Carer Needs Assessment (PCNA) if it appears to them that a parent carer of a disabled child may have needs for support, or if the parent requests one.</p> <p>The Care Quality Commission expects the council to have a dedicated Autism Strategy that supports the delivery of our duties to autistic people, their families, and their carers. In our information returns, we referenced the existing strategy.</p>			
Risk Management:	N/A			
Property:	N/A			
Policy:	<p>The proposed strategy is aligned with <i>The National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults 2021–2026</i>. It also aligns with key local policies, including the West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023–2027 and the West Berkshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2029.</p>			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
<p>A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?</p>	X			<p>The Strategy should strengthen support for autistic people and their families or carers, including those with protected characteristics such as disabilities.</p>

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The Strategy should strengthen support for autistic people and their families or carers, including those with protected characteristics such as disabilities.
Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:	X			Social Care needs are closely related to Health needs; the strategy refers to continued joint working with our health partners.
ICT Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The All-Age Autism Strategy supports the priorities outlined in the Council's Strategy.
Core Business:	X			The All-Age Autism Strategy supports the priorities outlined in the Council's Strategy.
Data Impact:		X		

Consultation and Engagement:	<p>Consultation has taken place with key stakeholders and organisations during the development of the draft strategy. The partner organisations include representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Advocacy People, Learning Disability Partnership Board - Autism Berkshire - Thames Valley Integrated Care Board - Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - Berkshire Neurodivergent System Transformation Programme Lead
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Criminal Justice System- Thames Valley Police <p>Consultation also took place with Lesley Botchway Autism Team Co-ordinator.</p> <p>It is intended for a public consultation to be undertaken.</p>
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4. Executive Summary

4.1 There are important benefits to be derived from the publication of an All-Age Autism Strategy for adults and children. It provides the following:

- Clarity on how the council will collaborate with partner organisations to identify and enhance support for autistic children and adults, ensuring that provision is tailored to individual needs rather than driven solely by diagnosis, and grounded in a fully person-centred approach.
- Focus on strengthening the skills of educational professionals and ensuring that more autistic children can thrive within their local communities.
- Clarity on the council’s commitment to providing information and advice to autistic people, families and carers when they need it and at the right time.
- Aim is to strengthen public understanding, reduce stigma and loneliness, and support the development of services that are more inclusive of autistic people.
- Work with our partners to improve access to mainstream health services, reduce reliance on inpatient mental health settings, and strengthen support within the community.

4.2 A draft All-Age Autism Strategy has been developed and will progress through the governance process before public consultation.

5. Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The Adult Autism Strategy 2019–2022 is currently being reviewed and co-produced. Although it was originally developed as an adult-focused strategy, we intend to transition to an all-age approach to ensure alignment with the national strategy. Progress was delayed while we carried out a survey in 2023 to gather the views of autistic people in West Berkshire. The findings were published in 2024 and all form part to help shape the updated strategy.

Background

5.2 The process for the development of the draft All-Age Autism Strategy is as follows:

- (a) Formation of a sub-group of the Autism Partnership Board which has reviewed the existing strategy and developed an update version.
- (b) Development of an Action Plan which will be monitored by the Autism Partnership Board in the quarterly meetings.

Proposals

5.3 The proposal is for the draft strategy to be published.

6. Other options considered

To not develop an All-Age Autism Strategy. This is not advised as it will undermine the support to this important group.

7. Conclusion

The adoption of the All-Age Autism Strategy is an important step in ensuring that autistic people are appropriately supported by the council and partner agencies.

8. Appendices

- a. Appendix A – Equity Impact Assessment
- b. Appendix B – All-Age Autism Strategy 2026-2029 (Draft)
- c. Appendix C -Autism Survey Responses 2023

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

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

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees or Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Officer details:

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West Berkshire Council Equity Impact Assessment

February 2026

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Section 1: Summary details

<p>Directorate and Service Area</p>	<p>People Directorate, Adult Social Care</p>
<p>What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).</p>	<p>All-Age Autism Strategy (Draft) 2026-2029</p> <p>The all-age autism strategy sets out a shared vision and direction for partner organisations supporting autistic people living in West Berkshire. It outlines our collective commitment and the key priorities we will focus on over the next three years. Our aim is to improve the experiences of autistic children and adults, along with their families and carers, and to achieve better outcomes for all.</p> <p>Under the Care Act 2014 local authorities have a legal duty to provide care and support for autistic adults, focusing on promoting wellbeing, preventing needs, and providing information. Key duties include conducting needs assessments, providing advocacy, ensuring tailored care plans, and facilitating the transition of young people into adult services.</p> <p>Key duties for local authorities regarding autistic people include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities must assess any adult who appears to have care and support needs, focusing on their wellbeing and desired outcomes. • A duty to provide services to prevent, reduce, or delay the development of needs for care and support. • Providing accessible information about care, support, and services in the local area. • Providing an advocate if the person has substantial difficulty in being involved in the assessment or planning process. • Ensuring that all care and support functions, including decisions about services, promote the individual's wellbeing, control, and independence. • Working with the NHS to ensure joined-up care, including housing and social care services. • Assessing and supporting carers of autistic adults, without assuming what the carer is willing or able to do. <p>The strategy is underpinned by several key themes, including:</p>

Equity Impact Assessment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs-led approach for children and adults, ensuring the right support is provided at the right time • Recognition and understanding of each child’s sensory profile • A strengths-based approach • Personalisation and person-centred practice • Enabling and empowering individuals and families • Building a strong ‘listening culture’ • Effective partnership working between home and school • Nurturing healthy, trusting relationships between parents and schools • Co-production, collaborating with our autistic community to shape meaningful solutions • Clear communication and shared expectations
<p>Is this a new or existing function or policy?</p>	<p>The existing strategy has been reviewed and updated.</p>
<p>Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).</p>	<p>The strategy aligns with the six priorities set out in the National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults 2012–2026 (DHSC). It aims to provide clarity on how the council intends to support autistic children, adults, and their families or carers, working with partner organisations including voluntary and community organisations. It will define West Berkshire’s offer to autistic people and those who support them.</p> <p>The accompanying action plan outlines how these commitments will be delivered. Key elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted training for professionals working with autistic children and adults in health and social care settings • public awareness campaigns • education initiatives that promote school environments where autistic children can thrive, with a shift from diagnosis-led to needs-led support • workplace strategies and specialist employment services to better support autistic adults

Equity Impact Assessment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying priority areas to reduce inequalities for autistic children and adults involvement of community-based teams to support autistic young adults who have been detained in hospital, both during admission and after discharge <p>The delivery plan also includes gathering feedback from autistic people during psychiatric admissions, ensuring they have opportunities to shape the support they receive and helping the plan remain responsive to their evolving needs.</p> <p>The strategy does not create any bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individual or groups within the community</p>
Completed By	Hannah Cole
Authorised By	Paul Coe
Date of Assessment	09.02.2026

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The existing strategy is out of date and required a comprehensive review. As it currently focuses only on adults, there was a clear need to revise it into an all-age strategy aligned with the six priorities of the national strategy for autistic children and adults.</p> <p>To ensure the voices of autistic adults were captured, a survey was undertaken, and the results were published. The survey questions were designed around the six national priority areas, providing valuable insight to inform the revised strategy. We also held a focus group to gather the views of professionals who work with autistic people. The discussion was guided by questions aligned with the six national priority areas, ensuring consistency with the wider strategy development. Several key themes emerged repeatedly, providing important direction and helping to shape the revised strategy.</p> <p>The Autism Partnership Board has collaborated with partner organisations, including:</p>
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Equity Impact Assessment

	<p>The Advocacy People</p> <p>Learning Disability Partnership Board</p> <p>Autism Berkshire</p> <p>Thames Valley Integrated Care Board</p> <p>It is important to note that the Board also includes internal council representatives, with members from Public Health and Education, including the SEND Strategy Officer and the Autism Schools Adviser.</p> <p>Consultation took place with :</p> <p>Criminal Justice System Partners</p> <p>Thames Valley Police</p> <p>Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Key Working Team</p> <p>Autism Lead Prospect Park Hospital</p> <p>Berkshire Neurodivergent System Transformation Programme Lead</p> <p>In addition, a sub-group of the Autism Partnership Board was established to lead the review of the existing strategy, with an autistic mother of three autistic children representing autistic people in the group.</p>
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Equity Impact Assessment

<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>Data information/research are all pointing to this direction and concerns seem to be the same.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. National Autism Strategy for Children and Adults 2021-20262. Autism Survey Results 20233. The 2024-2025 Adult Social Care Survey (ASCS) in England4. State of the District” Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Report for West Berkshire, (November 2025)5. National Autistic Society website consultation6. The Care Act 20147. The Children Act 1989, 20048. The Equality Act 20109. Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, West Berkshire Council 2024-202510. West Berkshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024-202911. Health and Social Care Act 202212. The Childrens Commissioner October 2024 Report
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>The draft strategy will be open for public consultation for six weeks to gather feedback from service users and stakeholders.</p>

Equity Impact Assessment

<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	Some older adults may have lived their entire lives without ever receiving a diagnosis or the right support for their neurodiversity. At the same time, many children with autism are still waiting for assessments and access to services. The All-Age Autism Strategy aims to address these inequalities and ensure that every autistic person regardless of their age receives fair and appropriate support.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	Autistic people are more likely to have co-occurring conditions such as ADHD and may face additional discrimination as a result. They also experience higher rates of physical health problems, and autistic adults are far	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029

Equity Impact Assessment

					<p>more likely to live with long-term health issues. Accessing healthcare remains a major challenge: around 80% report difficulties seeing a GP, and 88% feel that health professionals do not fully understand their needs. Improving access to essential healthcare is therefore vital. The All-Age Autism Strategy will consider the wider neurodivergent population and work to reduce these inequalities.</p>		
Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	<p>Research indicates a significant, well-documented overlap between autism and being transgender or gender-diverse, with autistic individuals being more likely to identify as trans, non-binary, or gender-nonconforming than the general population. Studies have found that transgender and gender-diverse individuals are roughly 3 to 6 times more likely to be diagnosed</p>	<p>Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults</p>	2026-2029

Equity Impact Assessment

					with autism compared to cisgender individuals.		
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	Autism affects people across all communities, regardless of cultural or ethnic background. The All-Age Autism Strategy aims to address and reduce inequalities experienced by autistic people throughout their lives.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029

Equity Impact Assessment

<p>Sex</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Positive impact</p>	<p>Although research indicates that females are less likely to receive an autism diagnosis than males, the All-Age Autism Strategy aims to address these inequalities and improve support for autistic women and girls.</p>	<p>Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults</p>	<p>2026-2029</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No impact</p>	<p>No negative or differential impact currently identified.</p>	<p>Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults</p>	<p>2026-2029</p>
<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No impact</p>	<p>No negative or differential impact currently identified.</p>	<p>Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults</p>	<p>2026-2029</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	We know that unemployment is higher among autistic people, and the national strategy aims to address this. We also know that difficulties in accessing assessments and support are increasing inequalities, with more people waiting for a diagnosis. There is a clear relationship between autism and	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029

Equity Impact Assessment

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
					socio-economic disadvantage. This strategy therefore aims to make a positive difference by improving access to identification, support, and opportunities for all autistic people locally.		
Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029
Care experienced people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive impact	There is a proportion of children and young people in West Berkshire with special educational needs	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal	2026-2029

Equity Impact Assessment

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
					and disabilities, and this strategy aims to make a positive difference by strengthening support for them and their families. Adult social care support autistic adults, many of whom have additional diagnoses, and we remain committed to supporting them and their families or carers.	Social Worker for Adults	
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	No negative or differential impact currently identified.	Hannah Cole Service Manager and Principal Social Worker for Adults	2026-2029

Section 4: Review

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

Review Date	February 2027
Person Responsible for Review	Hannah Cole
Authorised By	Paul Coe

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

West Berkshire Council's All-Age Autism Strategy

2026-2029 (Draft)



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Foreword

On behalf of the Autism Partnership Board, we are proud to present and endorse the All-Age Autism Strategy for 2026–2029. This strategy reflects our commitment to recognising and supporting autistic people at every stage of life. Unlike previous approaches this strategy acknowledges that autism affects individuals irrespective of age.

The strategy celebrates the strengths, talents, and unique contributions autistic people bring to our communities, while also addressing the barriers and challenges they may face. Our priority is to make West Berkshire an inclusive district where autistic people and their families can live fulfilling, rewarding lives and enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else.

We want autistic children to receive the right support to reach their full potential. We will work with professionals and families to provide tailored guidance and care. This will be achieved through a holistic approach, with professionals and families working together to provide tailored guidance and care.

By working together, we can build a community that actively supports autistic individuals and champions their unique strengths and needs. Taking this path moves us toward a society where inclusion is fully realised in action, not just in principle.



Patrick Clark

Executive Portfolio Holder
Adult Social Care and
Public Health



Councillor Heather Codling

Executive Portfolio Holder
Children and Family Services

Summary

The vision and purpose of the strategy:

We envision a community where autistic individuals and their families are respected, empowered, and fully included in every aspect of life. Our purpose is to deliver high-quality, responsive services that reflect the diverse needs of autistic people across all ages. By ensuring equitable access to support and opportunities, we are committed to building a brighter, more inclusive future for autistic residents in West Berkshire.

The Priorities of the strategy:

1. Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

Organise awareness raising campaigns for Annual Autism Awareness Day in April, using approaches such as school based activities and public posters to help increase understanding.

Enhance the knowledge and confidence of professionals working with autistic people in health and social care settings through high quality training, delivered as part of the Oliver McGowan Training for Adult Social Care.

National training program to start September 2026. The target is to train 2000 staff in the Children's workforce.

To publish a simplified easy read version of the West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board Information for Adults Living with an Autistic Spectrum Condition in West Berkshire.

Adult Social Care to develop an Easy Read version of the following information:

Autism: getting support - West Berkshire Council

Council support for people with a learning disability - West Berkshire Council

Council support for people with dementia - West Berkshire Council

General Practitioner (GP) surgeries should implement consistent reasonable adjustments to better support autistic individuals. This includes offering simple and accessible alternatives such as an online appointment booking system instead of requiring patients to phone the surgery. This is particularly important for those who may find it difficult to speak directly with reception staff. These adjustments should be adopted across all GP surgeries in West Berkshire to ensure fair and inclusive access for everyone.

2. Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

Introduce multi-support family hubs for autistic children and families. These provide a centralised, integrated access point for diverse and timely support, reducing the burden on parents. Enabling early intervention and collaboration between health, education and social care departments helps address the unique needs of families, improving outcomes and preventing crises.

The Berkshire neurodivergent strengths and needs tool will enable children, their caregivers and the professionals that know the child best (e.g. teaching staff, family workers, voluntary sector specialists) to answer questions on neurodivergent characteristics. The questions are written by national clinical and educational psychology leaders. The tool enables a neurodivergent picture of a child to be identified, visually summarised in a picture of the child's functioning, for the family and for professionals. The picture of the child's functioning will be accompanied by a series of recommendations of the adjustments that will best support the child at home, in school or setting and in the community, so that adjustments to support the child can begin immediately (to support the plan and review expectations for our SEND children).

Inclusion and belonging should underpin school behaviour policies, ensuring they are fully applicable to autistic students. Ensure schools regularly review their behaviour policy to evaluate its impact on autistic children. Encourage a structured approach that considers individual needs and promotes fair, supportive disciplinary practices. Strengthen communication between teachers and students by encouraging understanding tailored interventions. Align these efforts with the Equality Act 2010 to uphold inclusivity, protect rights and create a learning environment where autistic students thrive.

Support autistic individuals through key transitions such as moving from school to college or employment via the Autism Team Transition Project. This should be seen as a permanent project considering the many benefits it offers to autistic individuals.

Support the creation of quiet rooms in all schools. Use quiet rooms in schools as a supportive space, ensuring positive handling strategies that foster a calming and inclusive environment for autistic children.

Unauthorized absence coding, national guidance and involvement from Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance Team can support cases where children lack diagnosis or experience burnout at school level.

3. Supporting more autistic people into employment.

Promote inclusive hiring practices and workplace adjustments.

Encourage businesses to engage with the Disability Employer Scheme. Raise awareness among companies and employers about the benefits of the disability employer scheme, fostering inclusive hiring practices and increasing employment opportunities for neurodivergent individuals.

Provide guidance for employers to enhance workplace experiences and improve job retention for autistic people by strengthening their understanding of responsibilities, including the need for reasonable adjustments and awareness of support available through Access to Work.

Provide information about volunteering opportunities for young people and offer support to help them access these roles. Signpost individuals to relevant services such as the Jobcentre (Disability Employment Advisers) and Graft for additional guidance and employment support.

4. Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people.

Care Act assessment and reviews should include:

- Checking whether a person who has a learning disability and autism is being offered their annual health check by their GP surgery
- Checking whether they are receiving the support they need to attend their appointment.

Promote joined up working between all agencies involved in autistic person's care, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Community Mental Health Team, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Inpatient Services and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and ensure effective signposting to appropriate support.

Promote informed consent for young people from 14 up to 25 years with a learning disability by guiding them and their families to accessible resources, including social stories that explain health screening and help ease anxiety.

Identify areas for best practice and improvement from the LeDeR reviews (Learning from Lives and Deaths).

Promote the use of the Neurodiversity Passport and ensure it is kept up to date and uploaded to the electronic system so all clinicians can access it.

5. Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services.

Enhance access to information for autistic inpatients. Ensure assessments focus on individual needs, making it easier for autistic inpatients to access clear and relevant information about their treatment options and available support.

Gather feedback from autistic individuals on the quality of community and inpatient support.

Promote workshops for parents and carers of autistic adults.

Advocate for Care and Treatment Review (CTR) appointments for eligible autistic individuals in inpatient and community settings, and request CTRs where appropriate to help prevent escalation or imminent risk.

National Autistic Training Program for Inpatients.

Promote and support staff participation in the National Autistic Training Program, ensuring inpatient care teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide effective support for autistic individuals.

6. Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

Identify support needs early requires providing autism specific training for professionals across the criminal justice system. This includes understanding where such training is not currently taking place, how frequently it is delivered, whether refresher sessions are offered, whether the training is mandatory or optional, and whether new staff receive it automatically as part of their induction.

Provide preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals across all sectors of the criminal justice system.

Ensure that an appropriate adult or an advocate is available to support the autistic person. Leaflets explaining the role of an appropriate adult, along with guidance on how to access one, should be made available and translated into different languages to ensure accessibility for all.

Identify and develop opportunities for partnership working between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Community Mental Health Teams, the Police and other sectors of the Criminal Justice System to ensure seamless, coordinated support for autistic individuals across West Berkshire.

Promote the Berkshire Autism Alert Card. Encourage autistic individuals to consider applying for the Berkshire Autism Alert Card, ensuring they know where and how to obtain it.

Support carers in acquiring the card for those they care for, while respecting individual choice. Assess the card's effectiveness in providing recognition and improving access to appropriate support.

1. Introduction

In West Berkshire we feel it is right to have an autism strategy which covers the whole life span from childhood to adulthood, and also considers the needs of parents, siblings, carers and loved ones.

Autism can influence many different aspects of a person's life, and its impact can change over time. It may affect children in schools, colleges and universities, as well as adults in areas such as employment, housing, physical and mental health, wellbeing, social relationships and later life. Because of this, we believe it is important to involve a wide range of professionals, including those working with children in educational settings, hospital staff involved in admissions, and people working in the voluntary sector. Our strategy is therefore designed to take a whole life approach.

The estimated prevalence of autism in the UK is 1.7%, almost double the previous estimate of 1% of the population often cited in policy documents (O'Nions 2023). Autism is now recognised as a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference that is being identified in an increasing number of children and young people. It has been estimated that 90% of autistic adults aged over 50 years are undiagnosed (O'Nions 2023).

Thames Valley Integrated Care Board Autism Prevalence (Based on 1.7%)

ICB Place	Population	Autistic Population
Buckinghamshire	595,303	10,120
Oxfordshire	827,848	14,073
Berkshire West	589,245	10,017
Total	2,012,396	34,210

Patients Registered at a GP Practice, April 2024 [Internet]. NHS England Digital. [cited 2024 Dec 24]. Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/patients-registered-at-a-gp-practice/april-2024>

This strategy has been co-produced through several key contributions. First, an autistic mother of three autistic children, who is a member of the Autism Partnership Board and part of the subgroup responsible for revising the strategy, has played a central role in shaping its development.

In addition, the 2023 All-Age Autism survey, reflecting the views and experiences of autistic people in West Berkshire, has significantly informed the co production process.

Another important element of co-production has come from the subgroup members of the Autism Partnership Board, together with the wider board, all of whom have contributed to revising the strategy. We have also worked closely with the Autism Lead at Prospect Park Hospital, particularly in relation to Priority 5 building the right support in the community and improving support for people receiving inpatient services.

In addition, we consulted with the Berkshire Neurodiverse System Transformation Lead to ensure our work aligns with current and planned developments. The Berkshire Neurodivergent Transformation Programme is an evidence based, whole system change initiative supported by more than 1,500 co-design partners, including over 500 people with lived experience and 459 Headteachers. Governance is provided by Directors from Frimley and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board alongside the six Directors of Children's Services across Berkshire. As part of this work, the programme is introducing the Berkshire Neurodivergent Needs and Strengths Tool. This tool represents a significant development and is highlighted under Priority Two within this strategy.

The draft strategy was shared with the Principal Social Worker for Children and Family Services at West Berkshire Council for her comments, who at the time also held the role of Service Manager for the Disabled Children's Team.

Engagement with the police has also taken place to ensure that the needs and considerations of autistic people are reflected within the wider criminal justice system. It is recognised that the police represent only one part of this system, but their involvement remains an important component of this work.

Consultation has taken place with a community link worker from the Key Working Team in Berkshire West. The team supports autistic children and young people aged 0 to 25, both in inpatient settings and within the community.

We also worked collaboratively with professionals who support autistic people by organising a focus group to ensure their perspectives were included. The questions used in this focus group were aligned with the six national priorities to ensure consistency with the national strategy.

There are key themes that will run across the strategy that we would like to highlight:

- needs led approach for children and adults to ensure the right support is provided at the right time
- sensory profile of any child
- strengths based approach
- personalisation/person centred
- enabling and empowerment
- developing a 'listening culture'
- partnership working between the home and school
- developing healthy relationships between parents and school,
- co-production, working with our autistic community to develop solutions
- clear communication and expectations.

The strategy sets out clear objectives and actions for the Autism Partnership Board to meet its vision, that West Berkshire is a place for autistic people to live, work and thrive. Our priorities align with the six priorities in the National Strategy for autistic children, young people and adults 2021-2026.

2. Purpose

1. Inclusive, Lifelong Support

The strategy adopts a whole-life approach, extending beyond adult-focused care to include children and young people. Support is provided across all stages of life from early childhood to older age, ensuring no one is left behind.

2. Promoting Autistic Wellbeing and Challenging Stigma

It advocates a shift from a deficit-driven 'medical model' of autism focused on changing the individual towards a 'social model' that prioritizes adapting environments to help autistic people thrive.

3. Enhancing Local Services

A key objective is to strengthen how local services such as education, health, employment, criminal justice, and social care understand and meet the needs of autistic individuals and their families.

4. Engaging the Community

West Berkshire Council co-produced the strategy by actively involving autistic individuals, their families, professionals, and partner organisations such as the NHS and Autism Berkshire. This collaborative effort was carried out through surveys and focus groups, ensuring the strategy is firmly rooted in real, lived experiences.

5. Alignment with National Priorities

The strategy is closely aligned with six nationally identified priority areas, ensuring consistency with broader United Kingdom objectives for autism support and inclusion.

6. How the Partnership Has Been Shaped Through Co-production

The strategy is being shaped collaboratively with the Autism Partnership Board, placing the voices of those with lived experience at its core. This co-production approach ensures the strategy is informed, inclusive, and representative of the community it serves.

3. What is Autism?

Autism describes a lifelong variation in how the brain works, shaping the way a person perceives, communicates, interacts with others, and experiences the world. It is known as a developmental spectrum condition because it presents in many different ways and can involve varying levels of support. Diagnostic features typically include differences in social communication and interaction, along with repetitive or restricted behaviours and interests. Autistic people all share some important similarities including:

- differences in the way they experience the sensory world
- differences in the way they process information
- differences in the way they communicate and socialise

‘Difference is just that, ‘difference’. This does not mean ‘deficit’ or that autistic people are processing ‘less well’. While some autistic people may need support with day-to-day living (for example if they also have learning disabilities), many do not. Living in a world designed for non-autistic children and adults can present many barriers for autistic people, and it is important that we work towards removing these barriers’.
(Sue Granger 2024).

The Autism Partnership Board endorses the definition below.

Autism definition by Sue Jukes (Autistic mother of three autistic children in West Berkshire).

Autism falls within an umbrella term referred to as neurodivergence, it is likely hereditary and often runs in families. People who are not autistic and have no other neurodivergence are referred to as neurotypical. Autistic people have a difference in the way that their brain responds to their environment when compared to neurotypicals.

Autism is not a mental illness, nor is it a condition that can or should be cured. The autistic brain works differently, it isn't faulty, and you don't grow out of it. Autism is classed as a disability in the UK, this is because an autistic person is at a disadvantage in society when compared to a non-autistic/neurotypical person because the autistic person's brain does not easily navigate society's neurotypical expectations that appear extremely odd to them.

Autism affects everybody differently; one autistic person can have a very different experience of the world to another. The table on page 10 sets out the criteria that a person should meet to obtain a diagnosis. These criteria are portrayed negatively as what is wrong with the person. As a society, we need to do more to recognise the unique strengths of the autistic brain. Some strengths are listed on the right-hand side of the table.

Diagnostic Criteria (DSM-5)	Observations by clinicians	Autism strengths
Social communication and interaction	A different view of social rules/expectations, body language, facial expressions. May need more time to respond, or may be less inclined to talk. Many autistic people have a low tolerance of hierarchy, particularly if it doesn't make sense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest communicator • Deep loyalty • High levels of empathy • Strong recognition of patterns in social situations that others may miss • Won't accept societal norms if they do not feel they are appropriate
Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, and interests	Need for routine often with very focused interests. If plans change, difficulty with accepting the change. Stimming – repetitive movements, actions or sounds that the individual uses to regulate their nervous system. Great enjoyment from repeatedly watching a show or listening to music on repeat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep focus, often experts in their field • Not easily distracted • High levels of concentration particularly on a subject of interest • Goal orientated • Creative problem solver • Reliable • Excellent memory • High levels of attention to detail
Symptoms significantly impair important aspects of functioning in society	Sensory reactions which often co occur with autism can make daily life difficult (Lights, sound, crowds, textures, tastes, smell). Some everyday tasks may need more support. Will need additional support to engage in learning at school, social environments or work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience (living in a world not set up for autistic people) • Skilled in advocating for themselves • When the environment suits them, they flourish
Early development	Signs must have been present in early childhood (examples could include): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in play style • Not reaching expected milestones • Fewer friends than expected • Disciplinary approaches didn't work • Food intolerances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive coping skills • Strong willed • Observant
Rule out Intellectual Disability or Global Developmental Delay	Intelligence has no bearing on an autism diagnosis. Clinicians must look for evidence of other conditions that can co occur (anxiety, ADHD, dyslexia, learning difficulty).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique cognitive profile • Potential for expertise in a certain area

Whilst acknowledging the challenges that exist for an autistic person in our world, we also need to appreciate that the different processing style also brings strengths such as high attention to detail and deep focus, creative problem solving, and desirable characters traits such as reliability and a strong moral code. Autism often co-occurs alongside other neuro-divergent presentation such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Dyslexia.

The medical model of autism focuses on deficits such as poor communication skills, with a goal of curing the individual via interventions. This model indicates that the problem is with the person rather than the environment. The medical model results in a view that autism is an impairment or a deficit which is highly stigmatising for our autistic community.

Conversely, the social model of autism focuses more on how an environment affects autistic people. The key aim being to support an autistic person by modifying their environment to meet a person's needs. There are a growing number of autism advocates (many of whom are autistic themselves) who are calling for inclusivity, in many areas to improve access to basic resources such as education, employment and transport to name a few. Providing adjustments to improve access to general resources such as education, employment, transport and health care.

Autism impacts more people than statistics suggest. Many are on long waiting lists for autism assessment, many adults are undiagnosed and there is still a gender bias resulting in under diagnosis in females. The increasing recognition of autism in our society is resulting in increasing need and demand for appropriate support to be available for this population of people.

4. National Guidance, Legislation and Programmes

4.1 The Autism Act 2009

The National Autistic Society led a campaign to create the Autism Act in England.

'In the early 1990's Jim Sinclair frequently participated in autism conferences led by parent-centric organisations but found them to be 'overwhelmingly hostile from both sensory and emotional standpoints'. The Autism Act 2009 was introduced to improve the services and support available to autistic adults in England and to guarantee their rights. The Act placed a duty on the government to produce and regularly review an autism strategy to meet the needs of autistic adults in England. It also placed a duty on the government to produce statutory guidance for local authorities to implement the strategy locally.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/15/contents

4.2 England's first Adult Autism Strategy - The Adults Autism Strategy 2010: Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives was published in 2010 and was updated in April 2014 along with statutory guidance published in November 2014. This guidance outlined nine areas of focus to be addressed:

- Training of staff who provide services to autistic adults in both voluntary and statutory services;
- Identification and diagnosis of autism in adults, leading to assessment of needs for relevant services;
- Planning in relation to the provision of services for autistic people as they move from being children to adults;
- Local planning and leadership in relation to the provision of services for autistic adults;
- Preventative support and safeguarding in line with the Care Act 2014;

- Reasonable adjustments for everyone that requires them;
- Supporting people with complex needs, whose behaviour may challenge or who may lack capacity;
- Employment for autistic adults;
- Working with the criminal justice system.

www.gov.uk/government/news/fulfilling-and-rewarding-lives-the-strategy-for-adults-with-autism-in-england

The Equality Act 2010 replaced existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The Act legally protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace and wider society. Autism is described as a ‘hidden disability’ within this act and therefore considered a ‘protected characteristic’. The Act applies to all service providers and those providing goods, facilities and services in Britain.

4.3 The Adults Autism Strategy 2014: Think Autism

This was an update to the government adult autism strategy (2010) version. ‘Think Autism’ set out a clear programme the Department of Health and other government departments will be taking to improve the lives of autistic people primarily through taking actions that will support local authorities, the NHS and other public services and their partners with their local implementation work. In summary its focus was on building supportive communities, promoting innovative local areas and services and improving advice and information for autistic people. Many of the requirements are now included in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2014-0547/Think_Autism_Fulfilling_and_Rewarding_Lives_-_an_update.pdf

Department of Health 2015 statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support the implementation of the adult autism strategy.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f7b68e5274a2e87db61e5/autism-guidance.pdf>

4.4 National Institute for Clinical Excellence Guidelines (NICE) 170 Autism Management of Autism in Children and young people.

<https://livingautism.com/nice-clinical-guideline-170-autism-management-autism-children-young-people/#:~:text=All%20health%20and%20social%20care,on%20the%20entire%20family%20unit.>

NICE produced the guidelines in conjunction with SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) about the management of autism in children and young people. The aim of the guidelines is to outline and enable more effective support and provision for children and young people with autism from health and social care practitioners.

4.5 The National Strategy for autistic children, young people and adults 2021 to 2026

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026

The Care Act 2014 places responsibility on local authorities to protect people who are at risk from abuse or neglect (sections 42-47). Many public services play a key role in helping people, including adults with learning disabilities and/or autism, to stay safe. The Care Act also strengthens the rights of people with learning disabilities, autism, their family and carers. It promotes fairer and more personalised care for individuals to be supported to achieve the outcomes that matter to them.

Other legislation inclusive of meeting the needs of autistic children and adults

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Health and Social Care Act 2022
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Mental Capacity (Amendments) Act 2019
- The Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007 Act
- Mental Health Act 2025 (received Royal Assent 18.12.25)

NHS Long Term Plan (2019)

To ensure autistic people (and those with a learning disability) live happier and healthier lives. Focus on ensuring adjustments are provided to improve access to health care services.

5. Local Strategies, Policies and Guidance

- [West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-2027](#)
- [West Berkshire SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-29](#)
- [Carers Strategy 2025-2028](#)
- [Berkshire – Safeguarding Adults Policy](#)

The West Berkshire SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029) and All-Age Autism Strategy are closely aligned in their shared commitment to fostering inclusive, person-centred support for neurodivergent individuals across all life stages. Both strategies emphasize early intervention, co-production, and the importance of tailored strength-based approaches. The SEND & Inclusion Strategy outlines priorities such as developing local specialist provision, improving transitions to adulthood and enhancing mental health support all of which are echoed in the All-Age Autism Strategy's focus on improving access to education, supporting transitions, and tackling health and care inequalities. Additionally, both strategies advocate for increased Autism awareness, inclusive environments, and collaborative working across education, health and social care sectors. Together, they form a cohesive framework aimed at ensuring autistic individuals and those with SEND receive the right support at the right time to thrive.

However there is widespread national consensus in England that the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system is broken and requires significant, urgent reform. Reports indicate the system is in crisis, fragmented, and under-resourced, with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) numbers increasing by 165% since 2014. The reforms aim to transform mainstream education to be more inclusive, reducing reliance on expensive independent special school placements. The proposed reforms are based on five pillars: early Support, locality of Provision, fairness, effectiveness, and shared responsibility.

6. Members of the Autism Partnership Board

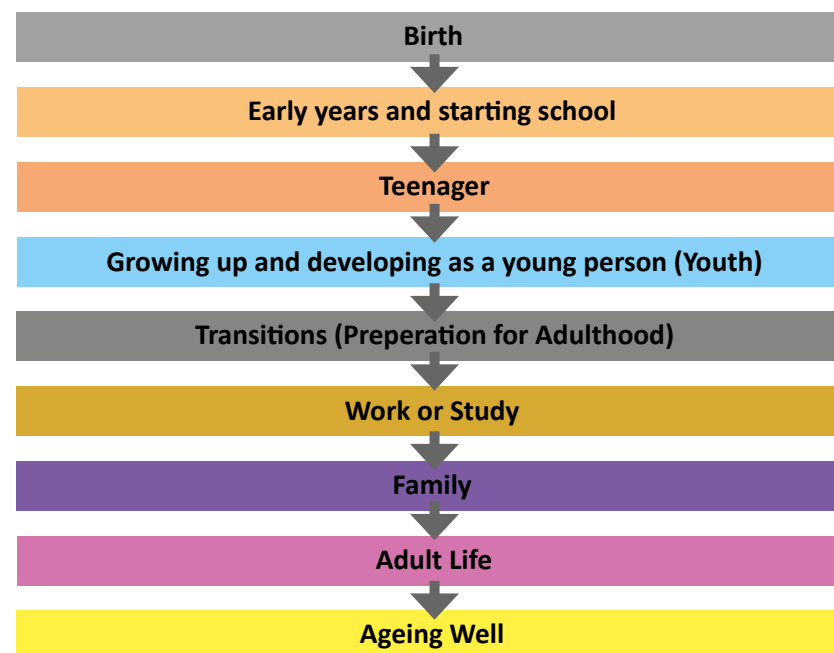
- Principal Social Worker for Adults, West Berkshire Council
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy Officer, West Berkshire Council
- Public Health Principal (Adults), Public Health & Wellbeing Team, West Berkshire Council
- Carer for an autistic person, West Berkshire Council
- The Advocacy People, Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Chief Executive Officer, Autism Berkshire
- Adult Support Mentor, Autism Berkshire
- Head of Section 117 Adult for Learning Disabilities & Autism, Thames Valley Integrated Care Board
- Autism and Crisis Care Pathway Development Manager for Thames Valley Integrated Care Board
- Autistic Parent of three autistic child
- Team Manager Children with Disabilities Team, West Berkshire Council

7. Our Vision

We want autistic people of all ages in West Berkshire to lead fulfilling, rewarding lives and to be supported to reach their full potential. This applies whether they are in school, college, employment, or taking part in community activities, and ensures that being autistic does not limit their aspirations or opportunities. This aligns with the council's second strategic priority: creating a fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all. We want West Berkshire to be:

- a community where autistic people feel understood and accepted
- to be an autism inclusive district or county

To deliver this vision requires us to work together with organisations and partners so that autistic children and adults receive the right support at the right time, and they are able to enjoy school, retain employment and see an improvement in their overall general wellbeing.



8. Scope

The Autism Strategy is an all-age strategy. It is pre and post diagnosis. It applies to those on the waiting list (NHS or Private) as well as those who self-identify and are formally diagnosed. It will focus on understanding the strengths and needs of the autistic person and promoting adjustments to overcome or reduce barriers to a fulfilling life. We need to be able to demonstrate and have respect for a different way of interacting or different way of doing things. The focus will be on equality, equity, diversity, maintaining identity and inclusion.

9. Overview of Priorities

In order to achieve our vision, we are aligning the six priority areas in the National Strategy:

Priority 1. Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society

Priority 2. Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood

Priority 3. Supporting more autistic people into employment

Priority 4. Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people

Priority 5. Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services

Priority 6. Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

10. Priority 1

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

Why is it important?

Increasing public understanding and acceptance of autism is essential to creating a society where autistic people have equal opportunities. For awareness to be truly effective, it must go a step further, beyond simply knowing, to actively putting that understanding into practice. This requires a cultural shift towards recognising and valuing neurodiversity, challenging stereotypes, and addressing misconceptions. It focuses on fostering inclusion, belonging, and anti discriminatory practice, while strengthening understanding. Achieving this may sometimes require a holistic approach within a multi-disciplinary setting.

An inclusive society ensures autistic people can fully participate in community life, from using public transport to accessing leisure facilities. Services should be designed with autism accessibility in mind, for example, providing clear bus timetables, simple and consistent signposting, quiet spaces, easy read version and flexible booking systems.

Improving accessibility means reviewing how services are planned and delivered, removing barriers, and making reasonable adjustments. Crucially, these changes should be co-produced with autistic people to ensure they reflect real needs and lived experiences. This collaborative approach not only improves services but also fosters greater mutual understanding between autistic and non-autistic communities.

Priority 1

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Organise awareness raising campaigns for Annual Autism Awareness Day in April, using approaches such as school based activities and public posters to help increase understanding.	Autism Partnership Board Autism Schools Advisors Children and Family Service, West Berkshire Council	Autistic people and their families will feel more supported and understood.
	Enhance the knowledge and confidence of professionals working with autistic people in health and social care settings through high quality training, delivered as part of the Oliver McGowan Training for Adult Social Care. National training programme to start September 2026. The target is to train 2000 staff in the Children’s workforce.	Service Director in Adult Social Care, Learning and Development Lead, Principal Social Worker for Adults, West Berkshire Council Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	Strengthen person-centred care, improving the recognition of anxiety, and supporting better mental health outcomes for autistic people all contribute to more accessible and effective health and social care services.
	Publish a simplified easy read version of the West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board Information for Adults Living with an Autistic Spectrum Condition in West Berkshire. WBC to develop an Easy Read version of the following information: Autism: getting support - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with a learning disability - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with dementia - West Berkshire Council	Information Co-ordinator, Adult Social Care	Autistic people can access information at the right time when they need it.

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	<p>General Practitioner (GP) surgeries should implement consistent reasonable adjustments to better support autistic individuals. This includes offering simple and accessible alternatives such as an online appointment booking system instead of requiring patients to phone the surgery. This is particularly important for those who may find it difficult to speak directly with reception staff. These adjustments should be adopted across all GP surgeries in West Berkshire to ensure fair and inclusive access for everyone.</p>	<p>Thames Valley Integrated Care Board Representative</p>	<p>Improved self- esteem and confidence when autistic individuals understand their unique abilities, they develop a stronger sense of self -worth.</p>

11. Priority 2

Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

Why is it important?

Nationally, delays in identifying neurodivergent characteristics mean that many children are not recognised early enough, and this pattern is also seen in Berkshire. As a result, families often struggle to understand how to adapt their home environments and support their children's needs, while schools can face difficulties in creating settings that are inclusive and responsive to neurodivergent pupils. When children's differences are not understood and their needs go unmet, they become disproportionately represented in mental health services, child in need and child protection processes, residential and specialist Tier 4 placements, and, indirectly, within the criminal justice and Prevent systems. They also experience poorer transitions into adulthood. Overall, outcomes for this group of children are significantly worse than for their peers.

Children waiting for diagnosis (or more specifically waiting to understand their neurodivergent characteristics through screening) are demonstrated through national and local evidence to be more likely to:

- be excluded from school and to drop out of education due to difficulties coping in the school environment without adjustment.
- burn out and present at Hospitals (A&E), children's mental health services and Children's Social Care front doors in crisis.
- be overrepresented in SEND and Social Care high-cost placements when families and education providers are unable to manage children's needs e.g., following child or family crisis.
- be overrepresented in Tier 4 inpatient care facilities

Many autistic children, teenagers, and young people require additional adaptation to thrive in education. Ensuring they can access high-quality, inclusive learning is vital for their development, wellbeing, and future opportunities. This includes providing tailored teaching approaches, sensory-friendly environments, and staff trained in autism awareness.

Support should extend beyond school years to help with the transition to adulthood. This involves coordinated planning between parents/carers, education, health, and social care services, as well as guidance on employment, further education, independent living, and community participation. A smooth, well-supported transition helps young autistic people build confidence, develop life skills, and achieve their personal goals.

Priority 2

Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Introduction of multi-support family hubs for autistic children and families, as they provide a centralised, integrated access point for diverse, timely support, reducing the burden on parents, enabling early intervention, and fostering collaboration between health, education, and social care to address the unique needs of the whole family, improving outcomes and preventing crises.	Berkshire Transformation Lead	Families will benefit from a single, coordinated, and non-stigmatising point of access to a wide range of services, which improves outcomes for the children and reduces stress and isolation for the families.
	The Berkshire neurodivergent strengths and needs tool will enable children, their caregivers and the professionals that know the child best (e.g., teaching staff, family workers, voluntary sector specialists) to answer questions on neurodivergent characteristics. The questions are written by national clinical and educational psychology leaders. The tool enables a neurodivergent picture of a child to be identified, visually summarised in a picture of the child's functioning, for the family and for professionals. The picture of the child's functioning will be accompanied by a series of recommendations of the adjustments that will best support the child at home, in school or setting and in the community, so that adjustments to support the child can begin immediately (to support the plan, do, review expectations for our SEND children).	Berkshire Transformation Lead	We will be able to create a more inclusive, supportive, and effective environment for neurodivergent staff, children and families, leading to improved staff retention, better care, and reduced stigma.
	Inclusion and belonging should underpin school behaviour policies, ensuring they are fully applicable to autistic students. Ensure schools regularly review their behaviour policy to evaluate its impact on autistic children. Encourage a structured approach that considers individual needs and promotes fair, supportive disciplinary practices. Strengthen communication between teachers and students by fostering understanding tailored interventions. Align these efforts with the Equality Act 2010 to uphold inclusivity, protect rights and create a learning environment where autistic students thrive.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	Improving school behavior policy can significantly benefit autistic students by fostering a more supportive and inclusive environment. Adjustment that consider individual needs can reduce anxiety, prevent misunderstandings and promote fairness in disciplinary actions.

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Support autistic individuals through key transitions such as moving from school to college or employment via the Autism Team Transition Project. This should be seen as a permanent project considering the many benefits it offers to autistic individuals.	Autism Transitions Team, West Berkshire Council	Successful transitions can lead to better outcomes in education, employment and wellbeing.
	Support the creation of quiet rooms in all schools. Use quiet rooms in schools as a supportive space, ensuring positive handling strategies that foster a calming and inclusive environment for autistic children.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	Improved emotional wellbeing. Students can take a break in a supportive space, reducing anxiety and frustration. Children are encouraged to develop coping strategies.
	Unauthorised absence coding , national guidance and involvement from Emotionally Based School Non-Avoidance (EBSNA) team can support cases where children lack diagnosis or experience difficulties at school.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	This can help reduce stress for families, as parents often struggle to justify absences when their child's challenges are not formally recognised.

12. Priority 3

Supporting more autistic people into employment.

Why is it important?

Supporting autistic people in gaining meaningful employment is not just a matter of equity, it's a powerful opportunity to enrich workplaces and society. Employment plays a vital role in enhancing their well-being and financial independence, while their distinctive strengths such as precision, creativity, and analytical thinking, drive innovation and productivity across industries. By embracing neurodiversity, organisations cultivate more inclusive, empathetic environments that benefit everyone.

Benefits for Autistic Individuals

- Meaningful work can boost mental health, self-esteem, and overall life satisfaction.
- Employment provides economic stability and fosters autonomy.
- Jobs offer a platform to develop talents, pursue special interests, and build professional confidence.

Benefits for Businesses and Society

- Autistic employees often bring exceptional attention to detail, creative problem-solving, pattern recognition, and unwavering dedication.
- Their fresh perspectives and unconventional thinking can lead to breakthroughs and smarter solutions.
- Neurodiverse teams promote empathy, collaboration, and a richer workplace culture.

High Unemployment Rates:

The Disability Employment gap is still too wide, with around half of disabled people in work, compared to over 80% of non-disabled people. But the autism employment gap is even wider, with just 22% autistic people reported in paid work' (National Autistic Society [New shocking data highlights the autism employment gap.](#))

Despite their capabilities, many autistic people face significant barriers to employment, resulting in high unemployment rates in the UK and worldwide.

Priority 3

Supporting more autistic people into employment.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Promote inclusive hiring practices and workplace adjustments.</p> <p>Encourage businesses to engage with the Disability Employer Scheme. Raise awareness among companies and employers about the benefits of the disability employer scheme, fostering inclusive hiring practices and increasing employment opportunities for neurodivergent individuals.</p>	<p>Jobcentre Plus, West Berkshire</p>	<p>More autistic individuals will gain employment.</p>
	<p>Provide guidance for employers to enhance workplace experiences and improve job retention for autistic people by strengthening their understanding of responsibilities, including the need for reasonable adjustments and awareness of support available through Access to Work.</p>	<p>Autism Partnership Board</p>	<p>Better workplace experiences for autistic people.</p>
	<p>Provide information about volunteering opportunities for young people and offer support to help them access these roles. Signpost individuals to relevant services such as the Jobcentre (Disability Employment Advisers) and Graft for additional guidance and employment support.</p>	<p>Key Working Team, Berkshire West, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust</p>	<p>Volunteering opportunities offer significant positive impacts for autistic people, including enhanced self-confidence, improved social and communication skills, better mental well-being, and valuable pathways to paid employment.</p>

13. Priority 4

Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people.

Why is it important?

The national autism strategy acknowledges the health and social care inequalities that autistic people experience throughout their lives. The independent review by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner highlights the significant national disparities in waiting times and reinforces the urgent need to move towards a needs led system. Such a system enables early screening for neurodivergent characteristics within the community and supports timely adaptations across home, school or setting, and wider community environments.

The Children’s Commissioner’s October 2024 report identifies further inequalities that require focused attention from system leaders:

- National inequity and its impact on vulnerable children: The current system disproportionately affects children living in poverty and those experiencing wider societal adversity.
- An equalities issue: The Office of the Children’s Commissioner describes the situation as “an equalities issue” that “disproportionately impact(s)” the “most [economically] disadvantaged children.” Slough and Reading are significantly affected by child poverty, and West Berkshire has seen a 52.8% increase in child poverty over the past decade.
- Inequalities for global majority heritage families: The report identifies specific disparities affecting families from global majority backgrounds. This mirrors Berkshire’s co-production feedback, which highlighted that “Asian and Black children made up just 1% and 4% of ADHD diagnoses – despite making up 12% and 6% of the child population.”
- Emotional and long term impact of waiting: Prolonged waits for diagnostic assessment place a recognised toll on children’s emotional wellbeing and mental health, with consequences that extend across

the life course. The report warns of “storing up a tidal wave of demand for adult social care services, with neurodivergent children who do not get the right support disproportionately likely to grow up experiencing problems with poor mental health, substance misuse, and offending behaviour.”

Autistic people experience higher rates of physical health conditions, and autistic adults are much more likely to live with long term health issues. They also encounter major barriers when trying to access healthcare: around 80% report difficulties in seeing a GP, and 88% feel that health professionals do not fully understand their needs. Improving access to essential healthcare is therefore critical.

Social Care Institute for Excellence ‘Tackling Inequalities in Care for People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People project (published January 2025) examined the disparities they face, including delays in diagnosis, insufficient reasonable adjustments, and the impact of diagnostic overshadowing. [https://www.scie.org.uk/tackling-inequalities/tackling-inequalities-guidance/#:~:text=People%20with%20learning%20disabilities%20continue,autism%20\(LGA%2C%202024\).](https://www.scie.org.uk/tackling-inequalities/tackling-inequalities-guidance/#:~:text=People%20with%20learning%20disabilities%20continue,autism%20(LGA%2C%202024).)

Tackling inequalities in health and social care is key to reducing the gap in outcomes that currently contributes to reduced life expectancy, preventable deaths and unmet medical needs. By removing systemic barriers and shaping support around each person’s needs, we can uphold dignity, strengthen wellbeing and promote genuine inclusion across society.

Priority 4

Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Care Act assessment and reviews should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking whether a person who has a learning disability and autism is being offered their annual health check by their GP surgery • Checking whether they are receiving the support they need to attend their appointment. 	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council	This will help spot health problems earlier, reduces significant health inequalities, builds better doctor-patient relationships (including making accommodations), improves overall physical and mental health outcomes, and helps individuals manage their own care more effectively by addressing barriers to healthcare access.
	Promote joined up working between all agencies involved in autistic person's care, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Community Mental Health Team, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Inpatient Services and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and ensure effective signposting to appropriate support.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Joined-up working for autistic people leads to more holistic, effective, and person-centred care, resulting in improved outcomes, greater independence, and a better quality of life.
	Promote informed consent for young people from 14 up to 25 years with a learning disability by guiding them and their families to accessible resources, including social stories that explain health screening and help ease anxiety.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	It will improve uptake among autistic people, who are currently less likely to access healthcare screenings, and help increase life expectancy. Early identification of any issues will also enable timely treatment.
	Identify areas for best practice and improvement from the LeDeR reviews (Learning from Lives and Deaths).	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council	Reduction death rates among autistic people.
	Promote the use of the Neurodiversity Passport and ensure it is regularly updated and uploaded to the electronic system so that all clinicians can access it	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Autistic individuals are able to advocate for their specific needs and assert their rights in various environments, such as healthcare, education, and employment.

14. Priority 5

Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services.

Why is it important?

Many autistic adults are unable to access proactive and effective mental health care. As a result, many autistic adults experience high degrees of unmet health needs, often have poor mental health outcomes, and are admitted to mental health hospitals, sometimes for long stays.

According to the National Autistic Society, data published in July 2025 shows that <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/learning-disability-services-statistics>, as of June 2025, 2,040 autistic people and people with a learning disability were detained in mental health hospitals in England. Of these, 1,480 (73%) were autistic. There were also 250 under 18s in inpatient units who were either autistic or had a learning disability, and 240 of them (96%) were autistic. The number of autistic people without a learning disability detained in mental health hospitals has risen by 144% since 2015.

Supportive facilities and services are crucial for autistic individuals to live fulfilling lives by providing personalised help for sensory needs, communication challenges, and educational or employment opportunities, enabling them to thrive in society. Key examples include sensory-friendly spaces, visual communication aids, specialised staff training, early intervention, mental health support, and community resources that foster inclusion and independence by addressing the unique and diverse needs of autistic people across all stages of life.

Priority 5

Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Enhance access to information for autistic inpatients. Ensure assessments focus on individual needs, making it easier for autistic inpatients to access clear and relevant information about their treatment options and available support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Implementing a person-centred approach to information accessibility can significantly improve healthcare experiences for autistic inpatients Greater patient engagement.
	Gather feedback from autistic individuals on the quality of community and inpatient support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Better inpatient services for autistic individuals.
	Promote workshops for parents and carers of autistic adults.	Autism Berkshire	This will result in improved communication and more effective support strategies.
	Advocate for Care and Treatment Review (CTR) appointments for eligible autistic individuals in inpatient and community settings, and request CTRs where appropriate to help prevent escalation or imminent risk.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Improved quality of care. Regular reviews help ensure that treatment aligns with an individual's specific needs, preferences, and well-being. Reduced hospital admissions.
	National Autistic Training Program for Inpatients. Promote and support staff participation in the National Autistic Training Program, ensuring inpatient care teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide effective support for autistic individuals.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Staff will be more knowledgeable and able to support autistic patients.

15. Priority 6

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

Why is it important?

In an article titled *'Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System'*, published on the National Autistic Society website in July 2021, the report highlights the hidden challenges autistic people can face within the criminal justice system. In 2024, research was conducted into autistic female offenders in prison. All 12 female prisons in England were contacted and asked to provide: (1) the total number of autistic females, and (2) the total female prison population. The findings revealed an autism rate of 4.78% among the English female prison population, indicating that autism is approximately 13.7 times more prevalent in female prisons compared to the general population.

The justice system often fails to recognise or accommodate autistic needs, leading to misinterpretations of autistic traits like communication differences, which can result in misunderstandings and inadequate support.

A lack of support can lead to severe mental health impacts, social isolation, bullying, exploitation, and poor life chances for autistic individuals.

The **Equality Act 2010** requires reasonable adjustment and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 takes into account the individual circumstances ensuring additional provision is made for those with vulnerabilities.

The research findings highlight a significant lack of understanding of autism across the criminal justice system, along with a need for enhanced training on communication needs in all sectors, not only within the police. Police services have also noted that, in many cases, the behaviour in question has already taken place by the time they are called to the scene.

Neurodivergent individuals do at times come to the attention of counter terrorism policing. According to official Home Office statistics published in November 2025, covering Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme from April 2024 to March 2025, around one third of all referrals (2,955 out of 8,778) had at least one recorded mental health or neurodiversity (MHND) condition. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was the most frequently recorded condition, accounting for 14% of all referrals (1,226 out of 8,778). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-prevent-to-march-2025/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2024-to-march-2025#:~:text=around%20one%2Dthird%20of%20Prevent,relevant%20information%20was%20not%20captured>

Priority 6

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Identify support needs early requires providing autism specific training for professionals across the criminal justice system. This includes understanding where such training is not currently taking place, how frequently it is delivered, whether refresher sessions are offered, whether the training is mandatory or optional, and whether new staff receive it automatically as part of their induction.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) The Prison Service	Early intervention can significantly reduce the likelihood of autistic individuals becoming involved in the criminal justice system.
	Provide preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals across all sectors of the criminal justice system. Ensure that an appropriate adult or an advocate is available to support the autistic person. Leaflets explaining the role of an appropriate adult, along with guidance on how to access one, should be made available and translated into different languages to ensure accessibility for all.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Youth Justice Service Prisons Crown Prosecution Services (CPS)	Improved preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals.
	Identify and develop opportunities for partnership working between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Community Mental Health Teams, the Police and other sectors of the Criminal Justice System to ensure seamless, coordinated support for autistic individuals across West Berkshire.	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, West Berkshire Youth Justice Service and Thames Valley Police	Enhanced holistic support Improved early intervention and prevention.
	Promote the Berkshire Autism Alert Card. Encourage autistic individuals to consider applying for the Berkshire Autism Alert Card, ensuring they know where and how to obtain it. Support carers in acquiring the card for those they care for, while respecting individual choice. Assess the card's effectiveness in providing recognition and improving access to appropriate support.	Autism Berkshire	Reduced stress and burnout Improved mental and emotional health.

16. Monitoring arrangements

The Autism Partnership Board will take the lead in delivering the All-Age Autism Strategy and establishing the monitoring arrangements to track progress. The Autism Partnership Board will report to the Locality Integration Board, and regular updates on the Action Plan will also be submitted to the Locality Integration Board.

An accompanying Action Plan will be developed to run alongside the strategy. This plan will outline how each of the six identified priorities will be achieved.

- The Autism Partnership Board will continue to meet quarterly.
- At each meeting, the Action Plan will be reviewed to identify barriers, gaps, and areas for improvement.
- Regular updates on the Action Plan will be shared with the Senior Management Team to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Autism Partnership Board will collaborate with autistic individuals, carers, and partner organisations to identify solutions and drive progress. Autistic people and their families will have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the delivery of the All-Age Autism Strategy through a range of channels, including:

- An autistic parent of three autistic children who serves as a representative on the Autism Partnership Board
- A SEND Strategy Officer who is an active board member
- An Autism Spectrum Adviser for schools who contributes expertise to the board
- Partner agencies and organisations from both the voluntary and private sectors

The All-Age Autism Strategy will be formally reviewed and updated every three years, with the next revision scheduled for 2029.

17. References

1. [Autism Act 2009](#)
2. [Equality Act 2010](#)
3. [Fulfilling and rewarding lives : the strategy for adults with autism in England](#)
4. [The Adults Autism Strategy 2014: Think Autism](#)
5. [Patients Registered at a GP Practice, April 2024](#)
NHS England Digital. [cited 2024 Dec 24].
6. [West Berkshire carers strategy 2025-2028](#)
7. [West Berkshire council strategy 2023-2027](#)
8. [West Berkshire send and inclusion strategy 2024-2029](#)

18. Appendix 1 - Action Plan (Delivery Plan)

Priority 1

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
1.1	Organise awareness raising campaigns for Annual Autism Awareness Day in April, using approaches such as school based activities and public posters to help increase understanding.	Autism Schools Advisors Autism Partnership Board
1.2	Staff in Adult Social Care and Health to complete the Oliver M’Gowan Training (Tier 1 and Tier 2) in line with the training criteria and requirements.	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council Community Mental Health Team and other areas of the NHS
1.3	National training programme by start September 2026 – 2000 staff- Children’s workforce.	Children and Family Services, West Berkshire Council Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council
1.4	To publish a simplified easy read version of the West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board Information for Adults Living with an Autistic Spectrum Condition in West Berkshire. Adult Social Care to develop an Easy Read version of the following information: Autism: getting support - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with a learning disability - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with dementia - West Berkshire Council	Information Co-ordinator, West Berkshire Council
1.5	General Practitioner (GP) surgeries should implement consistent reasonable adjustments to better support autistic individuals. This includes offering simple and accessible alternatives, such as an online appointment booking system instead of requiring patients to phone the surgery. This is particularly important for those who may find it difficult to speak directly with reception staff. These adjustments should be adopted across all GP surgeries in West Berkshire to ensure fair and inclusive access for everyone.	Thames Valley Integrated Care Board Representative.

Priority 2

Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
2.1	Introduction of multi-support family hubs for autistic children and families, as they provide a centralised, integrated access point for diverse, timely support, reducing the burden on parents, enabling early intervention, and fostering collaboration between health, education, and social care to address the unique needs of the whole family, improving outcomes and preventing crises.	Berkshire Transformation Lead
2.2	The Berkshire neurodivergent strengths and needs tool.	Berkshire Transformation Lead
2.3	Ensure schools regularly review their behaviour policy to evaluate its impact on autistic children. Encourage a structured approach that considers individual needs and promotes fair, supportive disciplinary practices. Strengthen communication between teachers and students by fostering understanding tailored interventions. Align these efforts with the Equality Act 2010 to uphold inclusivity, protect rights and create a learning environment where autistic students thrive.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council
2.4	Support autistic individuals through key transitions such as moving from school to college or employment via the Autism Team Transition Project. This should be seen as a permanent project considering the many benefits it offers to autistic individuals.	Autism Transitions Team
2.5	Support the creation of quiet rooms in all schools. Use quiet rooms in schools as a supportive space, ensuring positive handling strategies that foster a calming and inclusive environment for autistic children.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council
2.6	Unauthorised absence coding , national guidance and involvement from Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance Team can support cases where children lack diagnosis or experience difficulties at school.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council

Priority 3

Supporting more autistic people into employment.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
3.1	Encourage businesses to engage with the Disability Employer Scheme. Develop a register of employers on the scheme, work with Autism Berkshire to increase employers signing up to the scheme.	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council Autism Berkshire, Job Centre West Berkshire
3.2	Provide guidance for employers to enhance workplace experiences and improve job retention for autistic people by strengthening their understanding of responsibilities, including the need for reasonable adjustments and awareness of support available through Access to Work.	Autism Partnership Board
3.3	Provide information about volunteering opportunities for young people and offer support to help them access these roles. Signpost individuals to relevant services such as the Jobcentre (Disability Employment Advisers) and Graft for additional guidance and employment support.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Priority 4

Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
4.1	Care Act assessment and reviews should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking whether a person who has a learning disability and autism is being offered their annual health check by their GP surgery • Checking whether they are receiving the support they need to attend their appointment. 	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council
4.2	Promote joined up working between all agencies involved in autistic person's care, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Community Mental Health Team, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Inpatient Services and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and ensure effective signposting to appropriate support.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
4.3	'Health Screening: Promote and support informed consent among young people aged 14 plus up until 25 years, with a learning disability by directing them and their families to accessible resources, such as social stories that explain the health screening process and help reduce anxiety.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
4.4	Identify areas for best practice and improvement from the LeDeR reviews (Learning from Lives and Deaths).	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council and other stakeholder or partners
4.5	Promote the use of the Neurodiversity Passport and ensure it is regularly updated and uploaded to the electronic system so that all clinicians can access.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Priority 5

Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
5.1	Enhance access to information for autistic inpatients. Ensure assessments focus on individual needs, making it easier for autistic inpatients to access clear and relevant information about their treatment options and available support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
5.2	Gather feedback from autistic individuals on the quality of community and inpatient support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, West Berkshire Key Working Team, Berkshire West, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
5.3	Promote workshops for parents and carers of autistic adults.	Autism Berkshire Autism Partnership Board
5.4	Advocate for Care and Treatment Review (CTR) appointments for eligible autistic individuals in inpatient and community settings, and request CTRs where appropriate to help prevent escalation or imminent risk.	Mental health inpatient services, West Berkshire
5.5	National Autistic Training Programme for inpatients. Promote and support staff participation in the National Autistic Training Programme, ensuring inpatient care teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide effective support for autistic individuals. To monitor the number of staff who attend the training programme.	Mental health inpatient and outpatients services, West Berkshire

Priority 6

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
6.1	Identify support needs early requires providing autism specific training for professionals across the criminal justice system. This includes understanding where such training is not currently taking place, how frequently it is delivered, whether refresher sessions are offered, whether the training is mandatory or optional, and whether new staff receive it automatically as part of their induction.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) The Prison Service
6.2	Provide preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals across all sectors of the criminal justice system. Ensure that an appropriate adult or an advocate is available to support the autistic person. Leaflets explaining the role of an appropriate adult, along with guidance on how to access one, should be made available and translated into different languages to ensure accessibility for all.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Youth Justice Service Prisons Crown Prosecution Services (CPS)
6.3	Identify and develop opportunities for partnership working between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Community Mental Health Teams, the Police and other sectors of the Criminal Justice System to ensure seamless, coordinated support for autistic individuals across West Berkshire.	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, West Berkshire Youth Justice Service and Thames Valley Police
6.4	Promote the Autism Alert Card. Awareness and Impact encourage autistic individuals to consider applying for the Autism Alert Card, ensuring they know where and how to obtain it. Support carers in acquiring the card for those they care for, while respecting individual choice. Assess the card's effectiveness in providing recognition and improving access to appropriate support.	Thames Valley police, Autism Berkshire, Adult social care, West Berkshire Council

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All Age Autism Survey 2023 Results

We are currently reviewing our Adult Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2022. We want our revised strategy to be aligned with the National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults (2021-2026) which extended the scope of the strategy to include children and young people for the first time. The six areas set out in the strategy by the Government that would make a difference in the lives of autistic people and their families are:

1. Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.
2. Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.
3. Supporting more autistic people into employment
4. Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people
5. Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient
6. Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

To be better equipped to write the draft strategy the West Berkshire Adult Autism Partnership carried out an online survey to seek the views of autistic people, parent/carers, and family members. The survey was open for a period of 6 weeks from 5th June 2023 to 19th July 2023. We received a total of 144 responses from the survey (some responses were incomplete).

The responses have been arranged according to questions in the survey linked to the 6 priority areas.

Priority 1

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

We felt a starting point would be to find out about peoples experience of getting a diagnosis, waiting times and support after being diagnosed.

Q5. *Have you got a formal Autism diagnosis?*

134 people responded to this question.

91(67.91%) responded 'Yes'

5 (3.73%) responded 'No' I don't have a formal diagnosis, but I am being assessed

19 (14.18%) responded 'No' I don't have a formal diagnosis I am waiting to be assessed

19 (14.18%) responded No I don't have a formal diagnosis, but I believe I am on the Autistic Spectrum

Additional comments to the question some of which are outlined below.

It took me 3 years and 6 months only happened because of Richard Benyon.

ADHD diagnosis.

I have been reading about it and following YouTube channels of Autistic people such as Autism from the Inside by Paul Micallef, and I found out I have had signs of Asperger's since childhood.

Currently the waiting list is 3 years.

Consultant Psychiatrist has recommended autism assessment for me following ADHD diagnosis.

I self-diagnosed.

I have co-morbid diagnoses of attention deficit disorder and Anxiety.

I didn't get my diagnosis until Autumn 1999 when I was 14. It wasn't until then that I finally was given a Learning Support Assistant at school. Before that my mum had to fight hard to get me a diagnosis.

Assessment requested through doctor but not response yet. Been a trying thing to do.

I had a late diagnosis in 2017 at the age of 36.

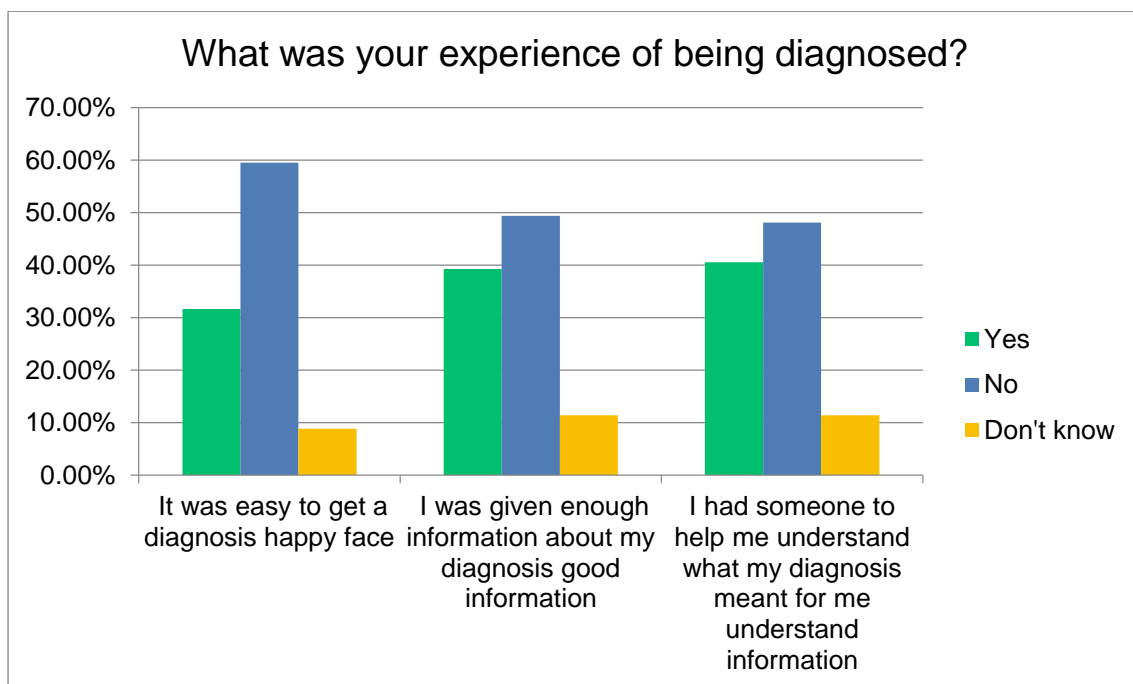
Only recently though - a couple of years ago.

'Drs and paediatric consultant have confirmed son is on the spectrum'.

'A child psychiatrist recommended an autism assessment, and we are all comfortable with this as a working diagnosis'.

Q7. What was your experience of being diagnosed?

80 people answered this question.



Additional comments on experience of being diagnosed are outlined below:

Feel glad that I now know why I am the way I am after so long feeling like I don't fit in this world.

You just get dumped after initial assessment, there's a little help but not much to help you cope with life afterwards.

I didn't get the help I needed after I was diagnosed.

The "Being Me" course was useful, but I needed, and still do need a lot more help with the follow up. What being autistic means more specifically.

Had to wait over 3 years for appointment to get diagnosed.

The waiting list is longer than 2 years. That's longer than any job contract I had ever had at the time so I would have moved out of the area by the time I reached the top of the waiting list. Fortunately, I could find the £1500 required for a private assessment and the GP surgery helped me find someone to do the assessment and accepted the private diagnosis.

I was diagnosed after a meeting with a support worker from Swan who wanted to help me get through domestic abuse.

It took ages to get a public health care diagnosis, so I had to go private.

It was relatively easy to get a referral and diagnosis, but I feel as though that was only because my son had previously been diagnosed.

Not that I can think of, I don't really know how the diagnosis went as I was only about two at the time.

I was diagnosed aged 15 in 2003. At this time Autism was rarely heard of. The diagnosis process was mostly my parents talking and me being asked a couple of questions.

I was fast-tracked for my diagnosis because I was a student at Cambridge University, and they had an autism research clinic. I know that my experience is not the norm in this regard.

It was a relief to finally understand why I'd been struggling all my life.

As I was only 3 at the time when I got my diagnosis, I can only get this information from my mother as I do not have much memory from it.

As I was only 3 at the time, I only have the experience that my mother has told me regarding this issue. From what my mother has told me, it was both easy and difficult to get a diagnosis at the same time.

You're given your diagnosis but only really get a basic course on autism afterwards, and no counselling post diagnosis is available - this would be very important as there is a grieving process to go through as you realise you will never be better and never be normal. You are left floundering to make your own way.

As my mum was in charge of getting my diagnosis, I don't really have much knowledge of what went on at the time.

I was diagnosed when I was 7. My mum had to do it all though the GP. I was originally referred to OT who referred me for an Autism diagnosis. I was diagnosed with Aspergers.

Was 10 so wasn't fully told / understood the situation.

The common point of entry gateway or whatever it's called, initially 'diagnosed' me from the piece of paper my GP sent in and said that I just needed Talking Therapies, not an assessment. They had not met or spoken to me, or even bothered to speak to my GP, but decided that they could diagnose me from a few written sentences requesting an assessment. How arrogant, incompetent, unjust and unprofessional is that?! Quite unbelievable. And wrong, so wrong.

Post diagnosis support

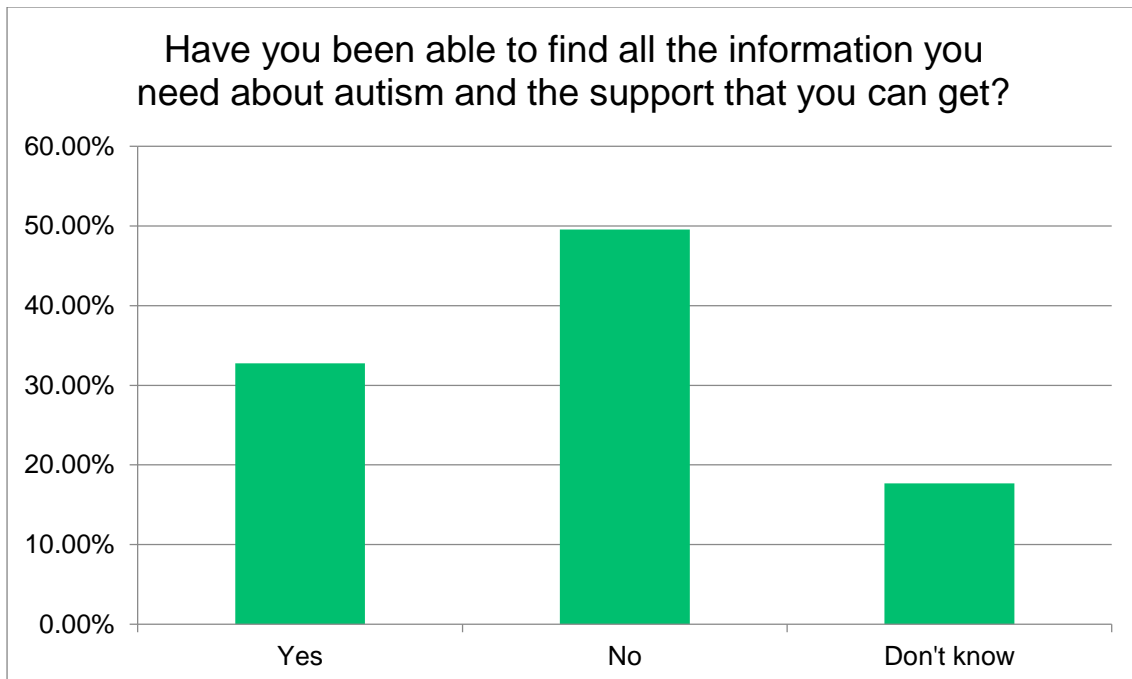
Q9. Have you been able to find all the information you need about autism and the support that you can get?

113 people responded to this question.

37 (32.74%) responded 'yes'

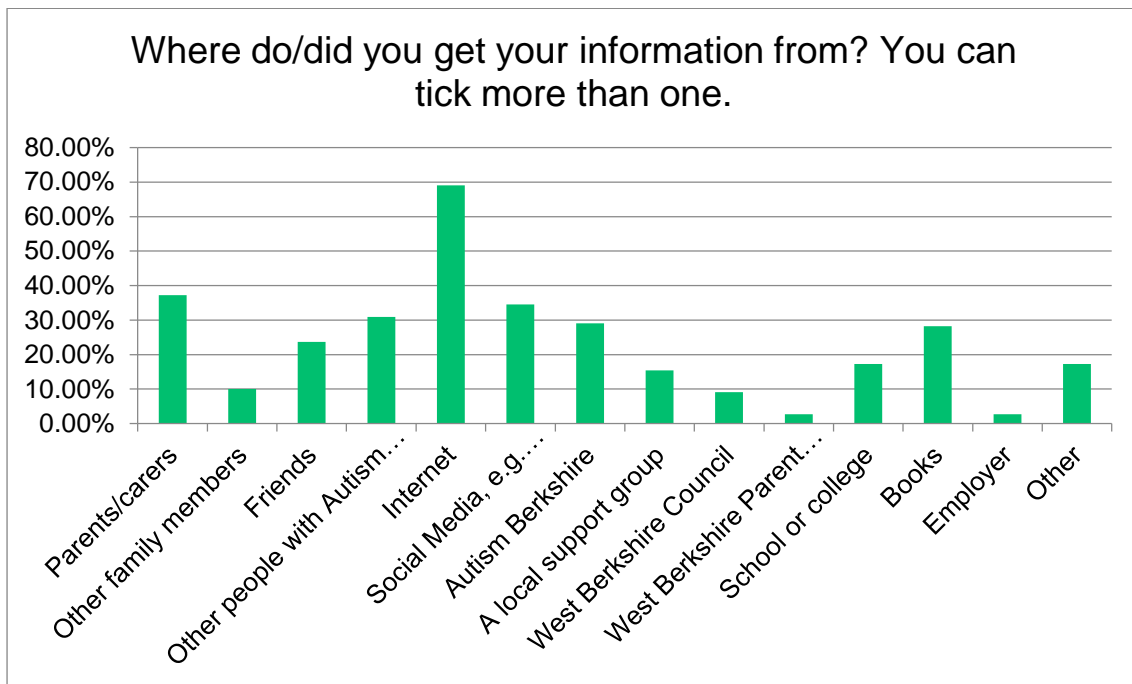
56 (49.56%) responded 'No'

20 (17.70%) responded 'Don't know'.



Q10. Where did you get your information from?

107 people answered this question.



Priority 2

Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

Q13. What do you think would make it better for autistic children and young people in school or college?

45 people answered this question.

Some responses outlined below

If they got the money given to support them spent on them, and we're going treated better.

More awareness by teachers, if a student is clearly struggling with normal teaching methods or seems to always be daydreaming etc, teachers need to stop assuming that they aren't trying hard enough and criticising, and instead pick up on the signs if they can and let the parents know or try to offer support.

Additional resources and/or lessons on what autism is, the different effects it can have on your life, and various different strategies on how to reduce various autism related issues.

More tolerance for everything.

Just raise more awareness, I swear that some of the teachers need to be spoon-fed on what being autistic actually means. Clamp down on discrimination too, so that, just like racism, everybody who mistreats someone for being autistic gets appropriate punishment. Some people seem to have an unhealthy obsession with treating autistic people as if they're stupid or babies, so getting rid of anybody who refuses to treat autistic people like normal people would make their lives happier.

Resources. A less structured learning criteria that isn't as focused on academic outcomes.

If teachers actually understood what autism is. I am a man, but I do think that autism at school is an even harder experience for girls and women, as adults have different expectations for how girls and women should behave. I also needed more quiet space at school than most children. I struggled with really simple things sometimes, like how loudly a clock ticked during exams.

Not to be bullied.

People to understand that you don't need to have a wheelchair to have a disability.

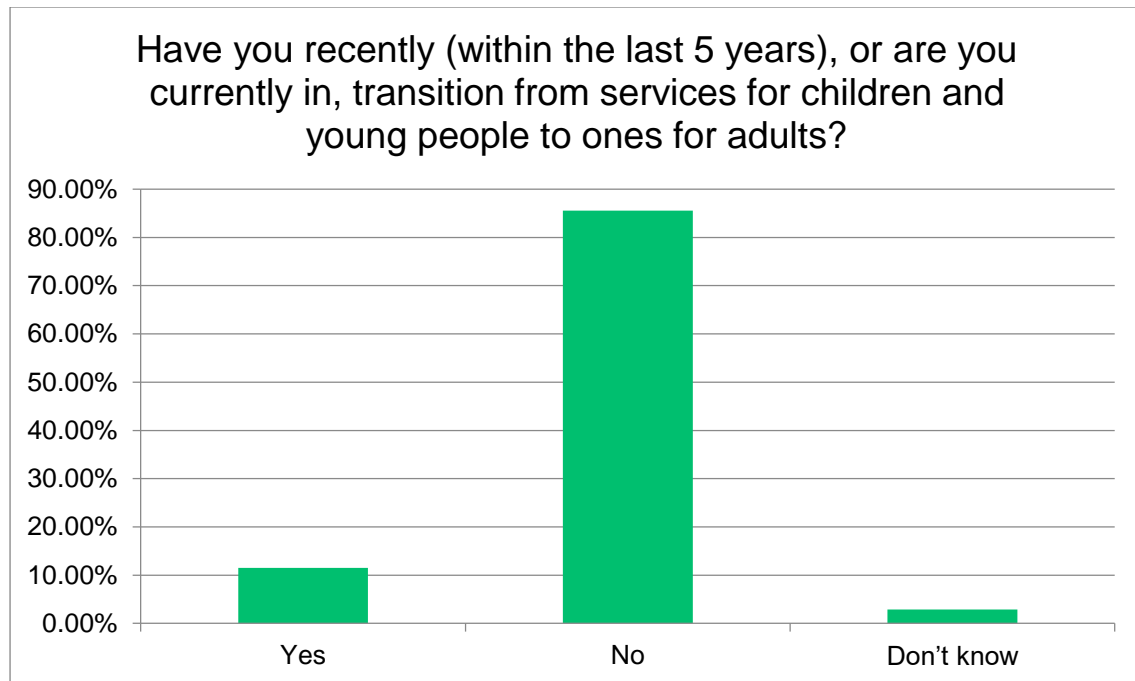
Staff that understand their needs and that not every autistic person is the same.

I would say that there ought to be teachers that are better funded and trained to understand neurodivergence and deal with students in a more tactful and helpful way rather than traditional means which don't always work. More support can also mean more help for students struggling with workloads and homework.

I think teachers ought to be better funded and trained to recognize when a student is struggling and to offer more support in schoolwork rather than just letting them get on with it.

Q21 Have you recently (within the last 5 years), or are you currently in, transition from services for children and young people to ones for adults?

104 people answered this question.



Q22. *Do you think the information you get about transition is clear and accessible?*

11 people answered this question.

- 1 (9.09%) responded 'Yes'
- 9 (81.82%) responded 'No'
- 1 (9.09%) responded 'Don't know'.

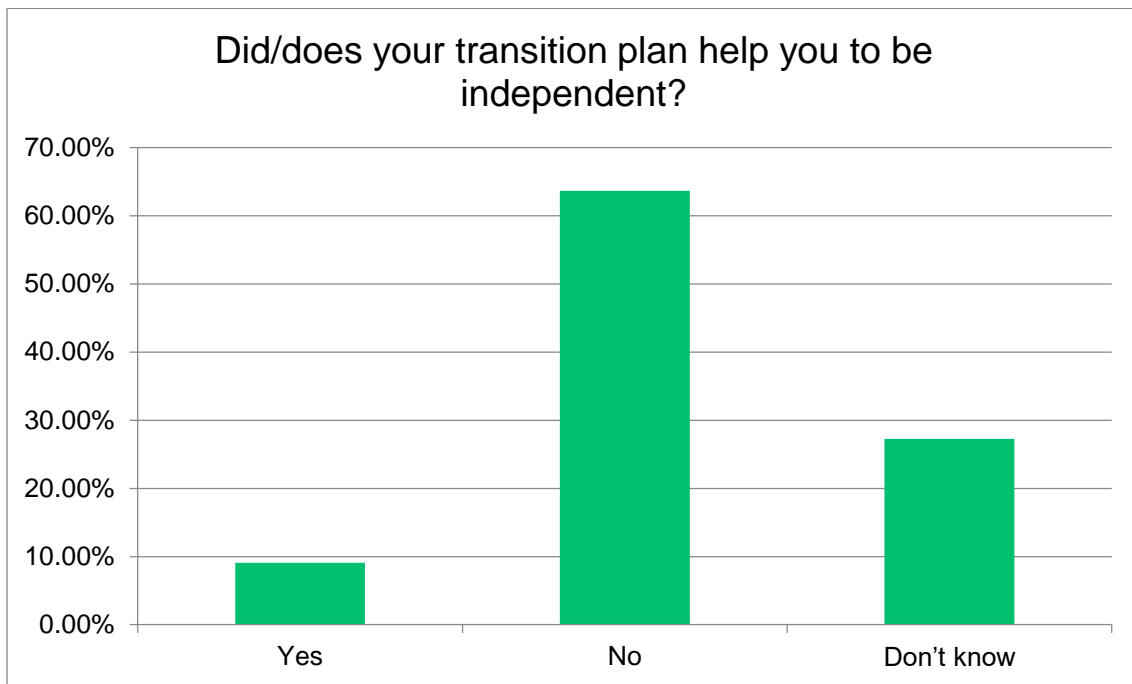
Q23. *Were you involved in planning your transition?*

10 people answered this question

- 3 (30%) responded 'Yes'
- 6(60%) responded 'No'
- 1(10%) responded 'Don't know'.

Q24. *Did/does your transition plan help you to be independent?*

11 people answered this question.



Q25. *Did/does your transition plan give you choice and control over your support?*

11 people answered this question.

- 2 (18.18%) responded 'Yes'
- 6 (54.55%) responded 'No'
- 3 (27.27%) responded 'Don't know'.

Priority 3

Supporting more autistic people into employment.

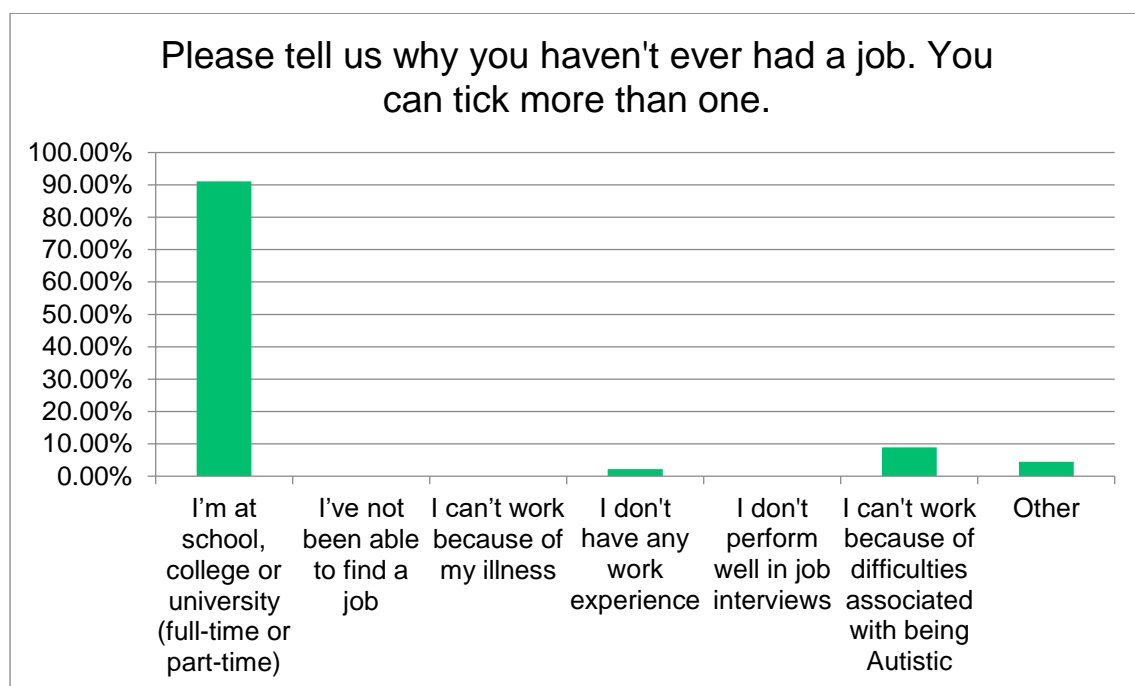
Q14. Have you ever had a job, including volunteering?

111 people answered this question.

- 67 (60.36%) responded 'Yes'
- 44 (39.64 %) responded 'No'

Q15. Please tell us why you haven't ever had a job. You can tick more than one.

45 people responded to this question.



Additional responses are outlined below.

'Registered to a mainstream school, unable to attend due to unmet needs. No full-time educational provision provided despite level 1 and level 2 complaints raised'.

'Hasn't been in school for a year because LA refuse specialist provision even though mainstream can't meet need'.

'But I will get a job when I'm old enough as my mum is a Job Coach'.

'Although my son has not been able to access his school for over a year'.

Q16. What type of jobs have you had? You can tick more than one.

61 people answered this question.

- 18 responded 'Business administration and management, e.g. office manager, administrative assistant'.
- 6 responded 'Financial services, e.g. bank manager, accounts assistant'.
- 7 responded 'IT and computer science, e.g. IT support technician, web developer'.
- 4 responded 'Environmental and agricultural, e.g. farmer, landscape gardener'.
- 4 responded 'Science and mathematics, e.g. chemist, statistician'
- 4 responded 'Building and construction, e.g. architect, bricklayer'
- 4 responded 'Art, craft, and design, e.g. artist, photographer'.
- 1 responded 'Hair and beauty, e.g. hairdresser, beauty therapist'
- 13 responded 'Education, e.g. teacher, teaching assistant'.
- 4 responded 'Health care, e.g. GP, physiotherapist'.
- 8 responded 'Hospitality and tourism, e.g. hotel receptionist, restaurant server'.
- 22 responded 'Retail and customer service, e.g. customer service advisor, store manager'.
- 1 responded 'Transport and logistics, e.g. train driver, postal worker'
- 1 responded 'Manufacturing, e.g. production manager, sewing machinist'.
- 0 Law e.g. Solicitor
- 0 Marketing and Advertising
- 25 responded 'Other (please specify)'

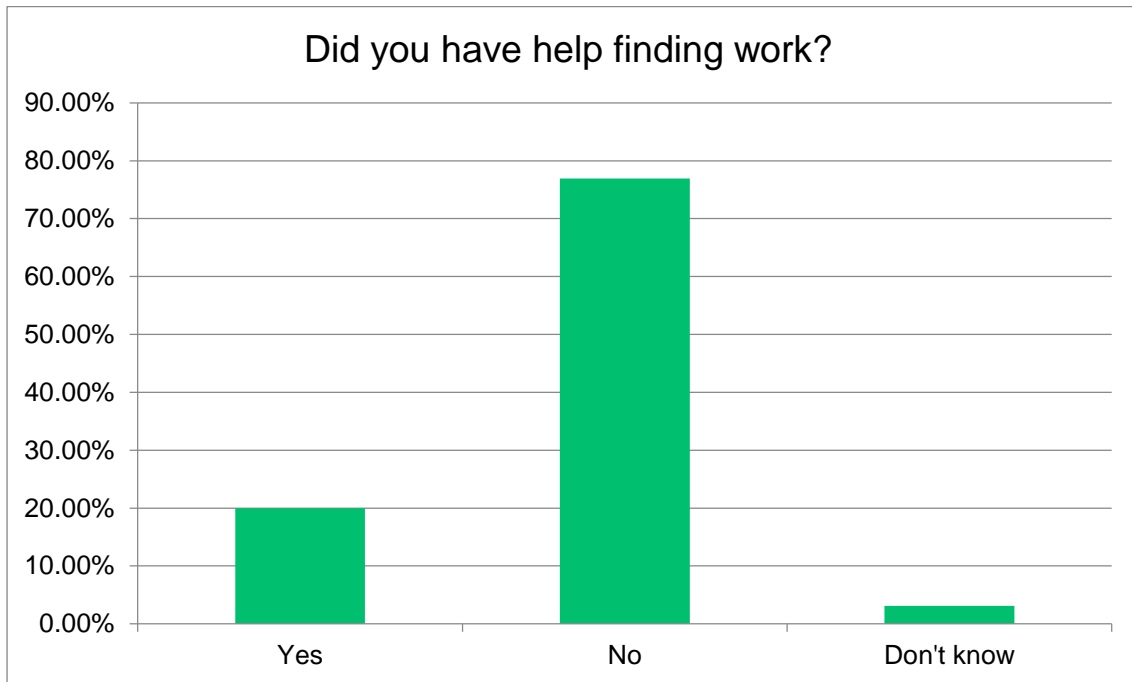
25 people who selected 'other' provided the following responses.

- Factory
- Library service
- Care Assistants, Support Workers
- Self Employed Writer
- Professional Actor and Musician
- Health and Social Care, Charity
- Car Parking Assistant
- Research Assistant
- Student Ambassador at University
- Charity sector and Local government -housing and homelessness
- NHS Healthcare Assistant and yard assistant with horses
- Health and Safety
- Workshop presenter for Autism Berkshire and volunteer for West Berkshire Mencap
- Charity shop
- 1 week volunteering in a charity shop in Year 10 and 1 week in an IT company while at college
- Library work
- Postal Assistant
- Chartered engineer
- Waitress
- Librarian

- Recruiter, Trainer
- Warehouse

Q17. Did you have help finding work?

65 people answered this question.



Q18. Who helped you find work? You can tick more than one.

12 people answered this question.

- 8 (66.67%) responded 'Parents/carers Parents'
- 1 (8.33%) responded 'Other family members'
- 3 (25.00%) responded ' Friends'
- 0 (none) Autism Berkshire
- 0 (none) A Local Support Group
- 0 (none) Job Centre
- 2 (16.67%) West Berkshire Council
- 1 (8.33%) School or College

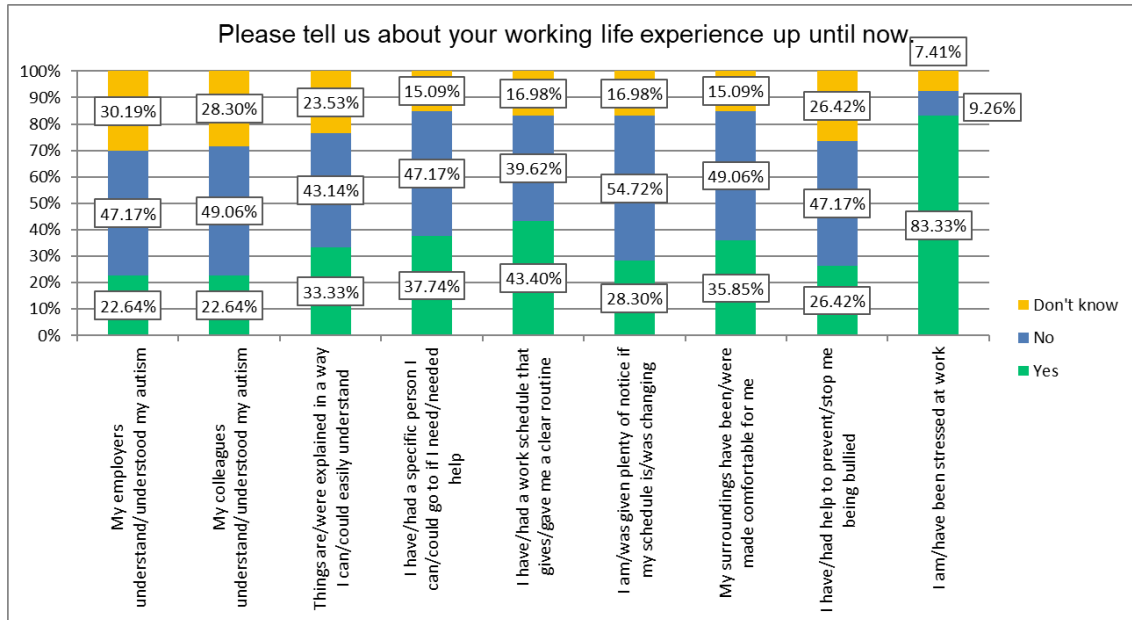
Additional comments

'I did 'One Day A Week' Work Experience in the Postal Team at West Berkshire Council for over a year and had a Part-Time role created for me at another council office.

'Also managed to find work myself too'.

Q19. Please tell us about your working life experience up until now.

56 people answered this question.



Below are responses to the statements.

My employers understand/understood my autism.

12 (22.64%) responded 'Yes'
 25 (47.17%) responded 'No'
 16 (30.19%) responded 'don't know'.

My colleagues understand/understood my autism.

12 (22.64%) responded 'Yes'
 26 (49.06%) responded 'No'
 15 (28.30%) responded 'Don't know'.

Things are/were explained in a way I can/could easily understand.

17(33.33%) responded 'Yes'
 22(43.14%) responded 'No'
 12(23.53%) responded 'Don't know'.

I have/had a specific person I can/could go to if I need/needed help.

20 (37.74%) responded 'Yes'
 25 (47.17%) responded 'No'

I have/had a work schedule that gives/gave me a clear routine.

23(43.40%) responded 'Yes'
 21(39.62%) responded 'No'

9(16.98%) responded 'Don't Know'.

I am/was given plenty of notice if my schedule is/was changing.

15(28.30%) responded 'Yes'

29 (54.72%) responded 'No'

9(16.98%) responded 'Don't know'.

My surroundings have been/were made comfortable for me.

19(35.85%) responded 'Yes'

26 (49.06%) responded 'No'

8(15.09%) responded 'don't know'.

I have/had help to prevent/stop me being bullied.

14(26.42%) responded 'Yes'

25 (47.17%) responded 'No'

14(26.42%) responded 'Don't know'.

I am/have been stressed at work.

45(83.33%) responded 'Yes'

5(9.26%) responded 'No'

4(7.41%) responded 'don't know'.

Q20. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of working life?

35 people answered this question.

Below are some of the experiences that people shared

I haven't had a formal diagnosis yet so have not been able to talk to any of my employers over the past 30 years about my needs.

It's been very challenging and exhausting for me.

I've been on a waiting list for diagnosis since 2020 until then I didn't know that I was on the spectrum. When I found out my current employer has a diversity policy and so I told them. Probably a mistake at the time because for about a year I was treated by certain colleagues as if I had a learning disability and put into a performance improvement programme (might be unrelated). Things have got better but mainly because they've realised all the benefits my brain pattern brings to the job (e.g. focus, pattern recognition etc).

I chose to be a freelancer because it is easier for me to plan my day and manage my time, and most importantly to communicate. I have problem communicating through phone or face to face. Therefore, communicating through email and messaging is ideal for me, helps to communicate clearly, as it gives me the chance to think clearly both in conveying my message and in perceiving others. Unfortunately, most employers and companies prefer phone calls, meetings, or face-to-face communication which is mentally draining for me most of the time.

Due to a burnout, I have been assessed as unfit to work and unfit to look for work.

No one at work knew I was autistic so I didn't receive any help but that was fine

The jobcentre needs to follow through with their ideas for back to work buddy support.

I don't always want to disclose that I have autism, because it doesn't always feel safe to do so. I mask a lot, so it can be hard because I look fine and do well at work, but underneath I find most days incredibly stressful.

It's difficult to answer these questions because I wasn't diagnosed until age 30 so I couldn't access reasonable adjustments.

Going through diagnosis and as a female not displaying classic symptoms, I have found work extremely difficult.

Everyday is a struggle.

40 year self-employed.

It's been difficult.

I didn't have my diagnosis while I was working. It was very difficult.

For most of my working life, I didn't know I was autistic. When I found out, it was difficult to know what I needed to help me because I'd always had to cope before without help.

Just that I wish it were easier to find a job that has an annual salary of way more than £12k. Sadly, nobody who offers better-paid jobs seems to want to take me on.

People are not generally accepting of people who are different. People pay lip service to diversity only.

I was bullied out of work.

I only received my diagnosis after working for >20 years. Getting a diagnosis helped me to be much kinder to myself about my perceived weaknesses.

No

The manager I had between 2020 & 2022 dismissed my Autism in my Appraisal in 2021 and didn't want to listen to a single word I had to say which I found Deeply Hurtful.

Have experienced hostility in the past and unsupportive managers but currently quite positive although I still get judgemental expressions occasionally.

Only in the last year have I had an understanding working environment with support. I have been bullied & actively pushed out in the past.

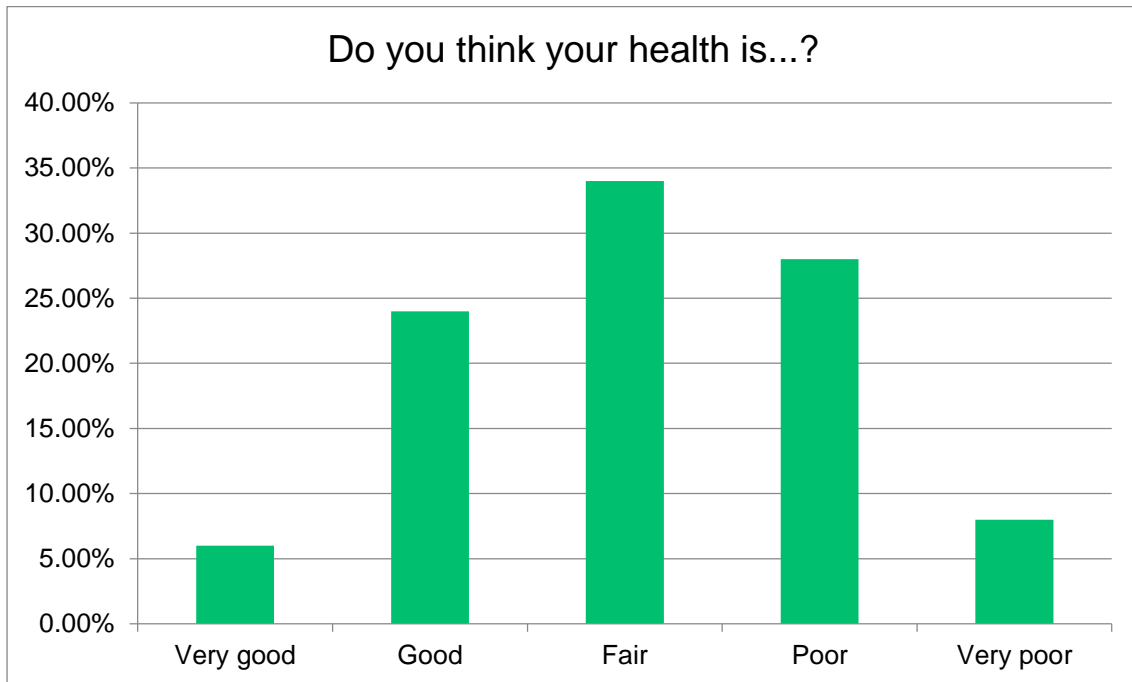
My employment in a clothes shop in Newbury only lasted 3 weeks due to a severe lack of understanding of Autism. I now work for an Autism and Learning disability charity called Talkback UK. I have been working for them for 2 and a half years. They have an amazing understanding of Autism and are willing to learn from and involve autistic staff members in all aspects of the charity and their work. They are the best thing to have ever happened to me.

Priority 4

Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people

Q35. Do you think your health is?

100 people answered this question.



Q36. Is there anything you want to tell us about your health?

50 people answered this question.

Below are some of the comments from people who answered this question.

Have bpd triggered by traumas.

I have had a big relapse in an eating disorder.

Some diet and exercise classes that are suitable would be great, lot of exercise classes are too loud for me.

I have suffered from anxiety and depression since the age of about 15 and I think this has been exacerbated by having Autism.

No

Chronic arthritis.

Sometimes I need to talk to a skilled psychologist, and I prefer the communication to be just through messaging and writing. I have been using AI's such as Woebot and ChatGpt to get help for my mental health. Because my preferred method of communication is writing, while no social care services or consulting or talking therapies accept such methods. They all require face to face or voice communications which are not the first choice in Autism spectrum.

Physical health is OK apart from blood pressure, but my mental health is poor.

I have generalised anxiety disorder which affects my life a lot, and it's mostly due to things related to autism.

My mental health is terrible, and I was under the care of the crisis team over Christmas. Physical health is good.

My mental health is poor. I also have a physical disability, which I can manage.

I have tried to get help many times but due to a lack of understanding of autism no one knows how to help or want to know how they can help. No one tests for problems they just throw medication at it based on what they think the problem is.

COPD.

My health has suffered through not having a formal diagnosis so have gone private.

My life feels very unfulfilling, and it feels like nothing I've done with it really matters. I expected much more to happen in my life by now, but society where I only get paid a little over a thousand of moving out anytime soon. I often feel
Lots of immune type conditions sarcoidosis, prolactinoma, chronic breast abscess, rosacea, arthritis.

I suffer with high anxiety and have low energy levels from Vasculitis.

I am currently perimenopausal, which I've heard is even more disruptive for autistic people than usual.

Occupational health questionnaire results said that my mental health is very poor. I feel a burden as nothing works out and no positive experiences.

Mental health is up & down.

I'm an adult who can't talk openly about their autism. Getting help when you don't want to talk is a vicious cycle.

Going to the Doctor for different mental health diagnosis(es) is very difficult to do as a person with Autism.

Q37- What makes it difficult for you to make changes to your health? You can select more than one.

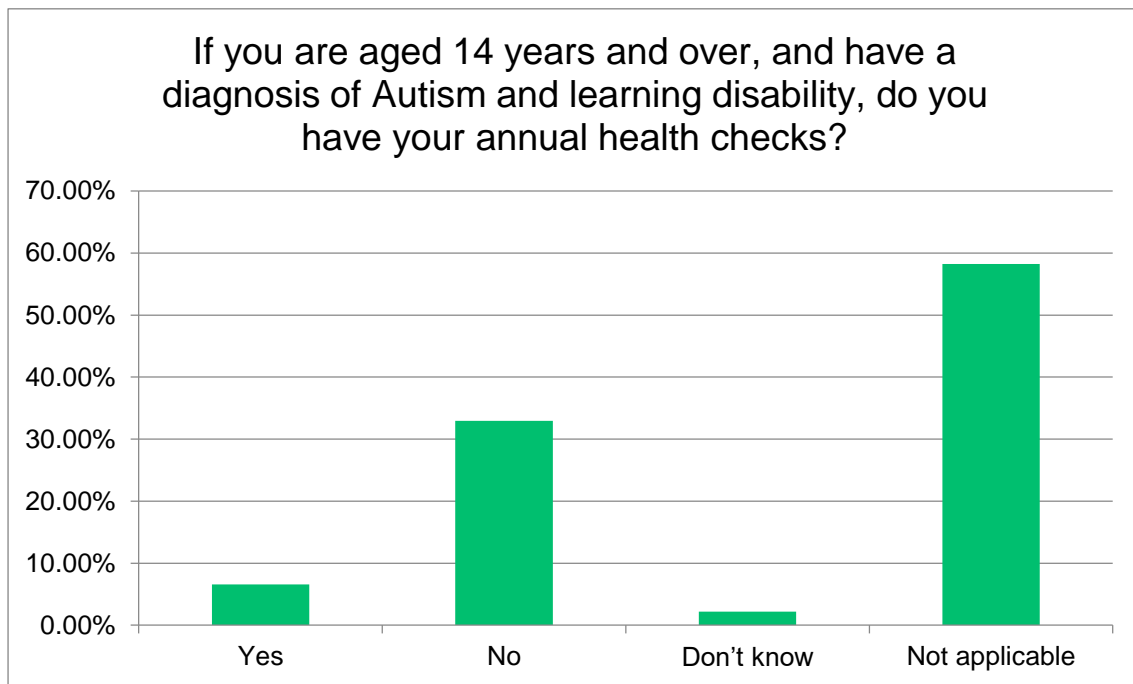
63 people answered to this question.

- 31 (47.69%) responded 'Services aren't autism friendly'.
- 37 (56.92%) responded 'My condition makes it difficult'.
- 23 (35.38%) responded 'I don't like to leave my house because of my autism'.

- 8 (12.31%) responded 'I'm too busy at work'.
- 11 (16.92%) responded 'I don't have enough money'.
- 2 (3.08%) responded 'I have too many social commitments outside of work'.
- 2 (3.08%) responded 'I have family commitments'
- 11 (16.92%) responded 'Other'.

Q42. You are aged 14 years and over, and have a diagnosis of Autism and learning disability, do you have your annual health checks?

91 people answered to this question.



Priority 5

Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient care

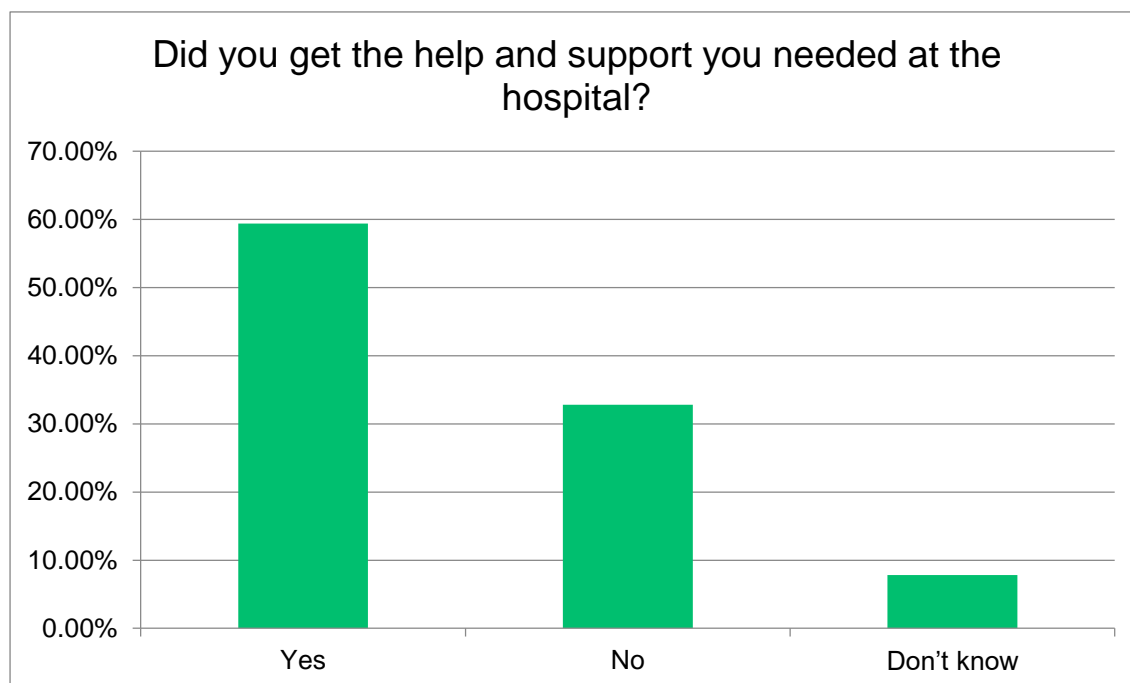
Q43. Have you ever attended a hospital outpatient appointment or been admitted to hospital?

94 people answered this question.

- 68 (72.34%) responded 'Yes'.
- 26 (27.66%) responded 'No'

Q44. Did you get the help and support you needed at the hospital?

64 people answered this question.



Q45. What do you think would make hospitals better?

42 people answered this question.

Below are some of the responses.

'Private rooms for people with autism'

'More proper training on sensory sensitives, auditory processing, and clear communication, more patience and less hostility'

'Getting the same nurse who knows your history. That your feel comfortable with'

'The doctors need to listen to what we are saying and not dismiss what matters to us- we are different, and we feel things differently. They need to help us address that not try to make us like them'.

'Commutation with GPs and consultants is not quite easy everywhere in the UK. They do not give you, their emails. It is always a number that requires going through several departments to reach your doctor. Most of the time phone calls are useless with lots of miscommunications. I think all hospitals and surgeries should allow their patients choose the way of communication and provide messaging services'.

'More staff'

'Seeing different people for speech and language. Seeing the same person would make things easier for my son'

'Understanding of Autism and having the time to allow me to adjust to the environment. For the environment to be more autism friendly'.

'They seem good enough as they are now, I'm not bothered'.

'Asking ahead of time if there's anything they need to know that will help, or anything they can do or bear in mind that would be helpful'.

'Better awareness and appropriate support available'

'Some staff good. Better explanation and more time'

'Staff having training in Autism'

'Neurodivergent friendly eg quiet rooms'

'more funding'

'care tailored to the individual patient. Clear medical notes stating their sensitivities, likes, dislikes etc'.

'Waited 6 hrs to be seen'.

'Communication friendly and clear'

'Better understanding of autism and how to deal with meltdowns.

'More autism support. Appears to normal to have additional needs.

'The mandatory Autism Training and improved understanding will hopefully help.

Low arousal spaces within hospital and even on wards would help'.

'Be more aware of the range of needs of autistic people. Being asked to wait for 2 hours in a public place won't work'.

'need to be more patient and explain things much more explicitly with no figurative language, need to understand level of stress in hospital environment very high so difficult to take things in and auditory processing much slower'

'quiet areas'

'resources'

'better understanding of autism (pda) sensory needs etc and more time'

'Advance information about the appointment. Why the appointment has been made, information about the way the appointment will be run, waiting times and a picture of the person you are seeing. So the person with autism can be fully prepared and not suffer confusion or have a meltdown due to triggers such as lighting, noise, confusion and waiting around'.

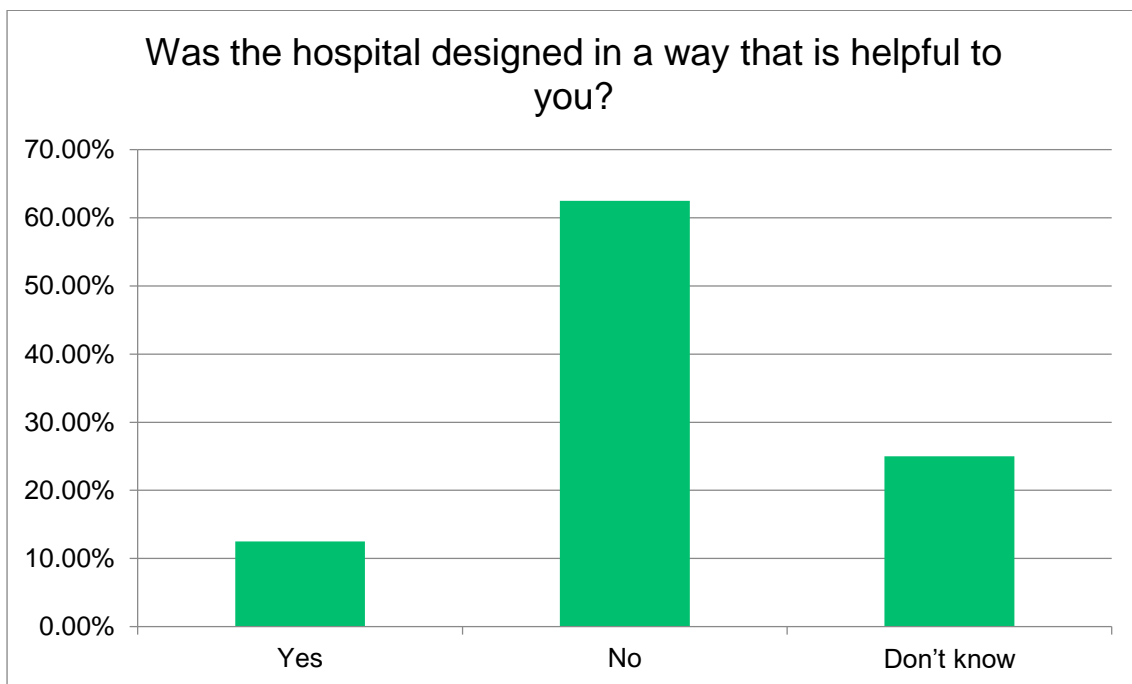
Q46. Have you ever been admitted to a mental health hospital for inpatient treatment?

90 people answered this question.

- 8 (8.89%) responded 'Yes'
- 82 (91.11%) responded 'No'

Q47. Was the hospital designed in a way that is helpful to you?

8 people answered this question.



Q48. Did the hospital mental health services understand you and help you to get better?

8 people answered this question.

- 3 (37.50%) responded 'No'
- 4 (50.50%) responded 'Don't know'
- 1 (12.50%) responded 'Yes'

Q50. What do you think would make hospital mental health services better?

6 people answered this question.

More understanding of autism and other mental health issues.

Maybe have an autism assessment.

I was discharged at nighttime. I could not find my way home. So I slept on the street overnight until a stranger decided to help me to find my bearings.

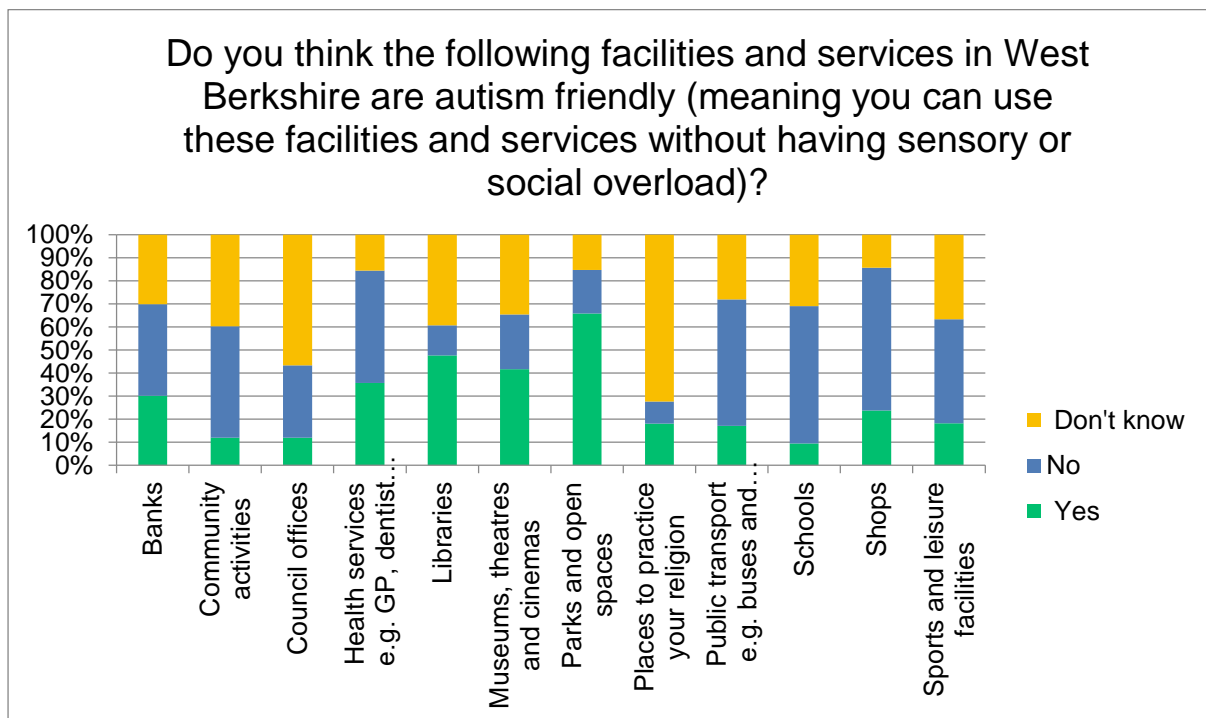
Staff having training in autism and how to deal with meltdowns.

'Better provision of specialist support. more available supported accommodation tailored to meet needs.

'The first unit was for a range of psychiatric conditions. It was noisy, some patients were aggressive. This made me worse. The second hospital was better but was more aimed at eating disorder patients and not those with ASD and an ED'

Q57. Do you think the following facilities and services in West Berkshire are autism friendly (meaning you can use these facilities and services without having sensory or social overload)?

86 people responded to this question.



Q58. How do you find out about activities and events in your community? You can tick more than one.

79 people answered this question.

- 42 (51.85%) responded 'social media, e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube
- 40 (49.38%) responded 'Internet'
- 37 (45.68%) responded 'Through other people e.g. family and friends
- 12 (14.81%) responded 'Local magazine'
- 12 (14.81%) responded 'Newspaper'.
- 12 (14.81%) responded 'Through local charities and support groups'
- 4 (4.94%) responded 'GP surgery'.
- 7 (8.64%) responded 'Through other autistic people
- 5 (6.17%) responded 'Library'.
- 6 (7.41%) responded 'Other'
- 5 (6.17%) responded 'TV and Radio'

Priority 6

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

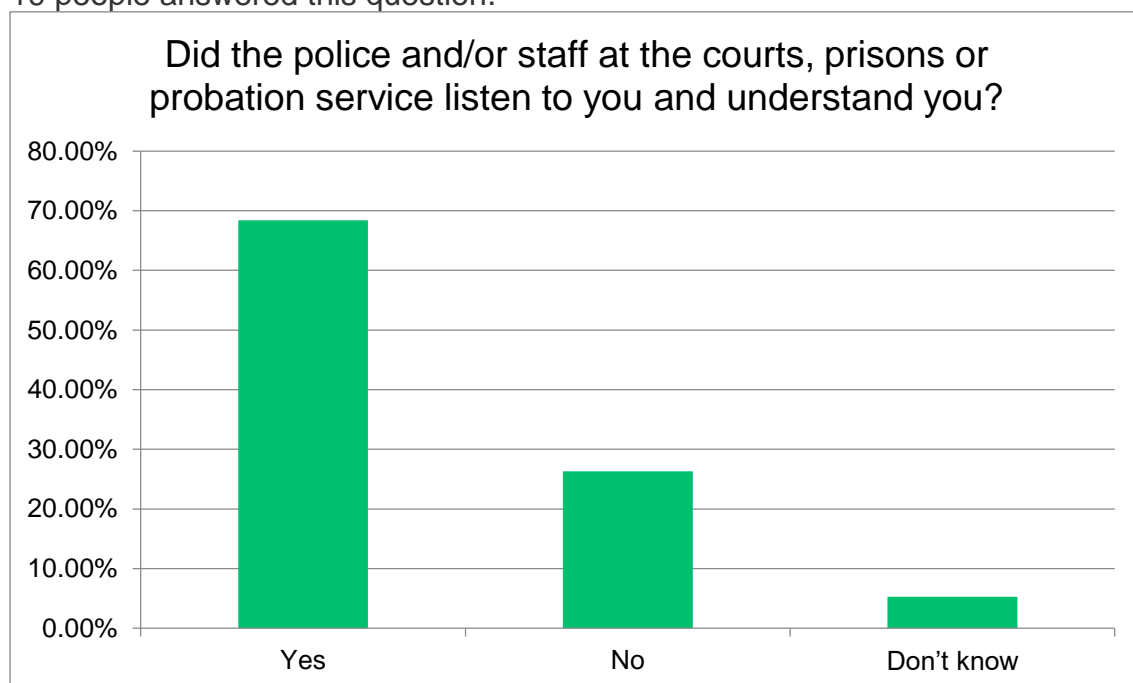
Q59. *Have you had any contact with the police, courts, prison, or probation service? This could be as a victim, witness, or offender.*

86 people answered this question.

19 (22.09%) responded 'Yes'
64 (74.42%) responded 'No'
3 (3.49%) responded 'don't know'

Q60. *Did the police and/or staff at the courts, prisons or probation service listen to you and understand you?*

19 people answered this question.



Q61. *Did the police and/or staff at the courts, prisons or probation service take your Autism into account and treat you fairly?*

17 people answered this question.

- 7 (41.18%) responded 'Yes'
- 5 (29.41%) responded 'No'
- 5 (29.41%) responded 'Don't know'

Q62. *What do you think would make the police, courts, prisons, or probation service better?*

7 people answered this question.

If they I responded to crimes I reported instead of downplaying what's hannening to me.

More willingness to listen to people and less emphasis on innocent until proven guilty and evidence, more compassion with victims and witnesses especially young children.

I am frightened of the police because I am not white. I had a bad experience on public transport once - someone threatened to kill me. But when I called the police, they assumed I was the perpetrator and they tried to arrest me. So I don't like dealing with the police.

TVP and WBDC gave me a CPN, not knowing my ASD condition.

While my experience with the police was in a different county when I was at university, and my experience was I think the system would be a lot better if certain behaviours weren't put down to arrestable offences, even though I understand that certain behaviours are unacceptable. Plus, helping them to understand why certain behaviours are wrong.

'As a victim there was no understanding'.

'Police need training on how to deal with asd'

Q63 Do you know there is an Autism Alert Card available for free?

84 people responded to this question.

31 (36.90%) responded 'Yes'

52 (61.90%) responded 'No'

1(1.19%) responded 'Don't know'.

Q64. Do you carry an Autism Alert Card?

31 people answered this question.

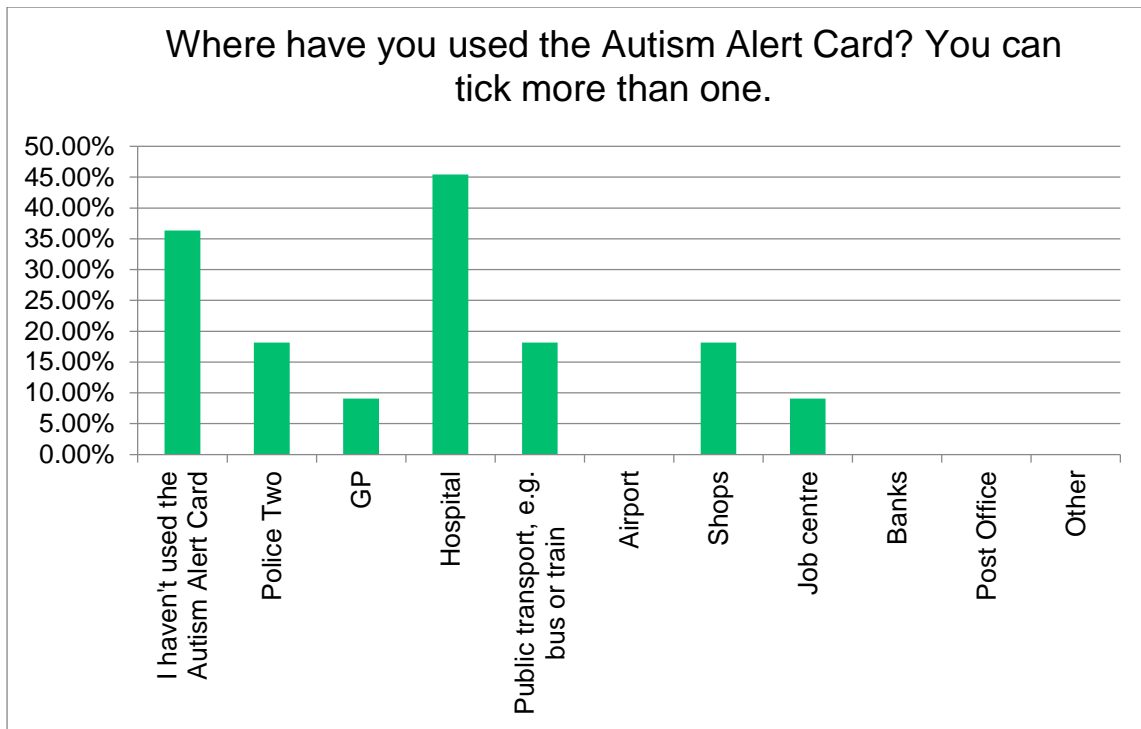
11 (35.48%) responded 'Yes'

19 (61.29%) responded 'No'

1(3.23%) responded 'don't know'.

Q65. Where have you used the Autism Alert Card? You can tick more than one.

11 people answered this question.



Q66. Did it help you get the support you needed?

7 people answered this question.

3 (42.86%) responded 'Yes'

2 (28.57%) responded 'No'

2(28.57%) responded 'don't know'.

Q67. Do you have any other comments?

43 people responded to this question.

Below are some of the comments

I don't like the idea of the being on a police list of autistic people. Especially given all the revelations coming out about police officers' behaviour.

I was given a CPN by WBDC/TVP, even though I have ASD.

No.

All of this is unknown to me. As soon as is have my diagnosis confirmed I will be accessing services.

I've lived in Berkshire for two years now. I have found it really unfriendly in certain respects. I have never heard so many open and unprompted discriminatory comments about gypsies - I think that this shows a general unease around diversity in Berkshire. Sometimes when I am cycling along the main road people shout nasty things at me from inside passing vehicles, including cars and buses. It makes me feel unsafe.

*I am waiting for an Autism assessment, **and** I am 50 years old.*

No support has ever been offered to me even when I am pleading for support and I inform people and services for my neurodiversity.

Disappointed that the alert card says "I have autism" rather than "I am autistic". I don't 'have' autism any more than I 'have' left-handedness or homosexuality.

I think you need to talk to people as I find questionnaires extremely difficult because sometimes the answers are not simple, hence surveys do not give a true and accurate picture.

One of the reasons why I did the survey was to make a point that for a lot of autistic people, especially when they transition into adults, there aren't a lot of services and social groups for adults, at least not as well advertised. In terms of employment, there are a limited amount of services that we can access and there are very few employers that understand autism and other neurodiverse conditions and often don't accommodate very well, so I do think this can be better, for both small and big businesses.

Please come up with some help for adults with autism into the workplace, like a programme with mentoring.

There needs to be more awareness and understanding of the different ways autism can present, particularly in women, and understanding of masking. As the ignorance is often a barrier to any understanding or accommodation because the most common response you get is 'you don't look autistic' and 'well everyone's a little autistic'.

I have been searching for resources such as books, articles, or educational courses that focus on communication and cultural knowledge specifically designed for immigrants with Autism. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any. I believe addressing the communication needs of Autistic immigrants is crucial for both their mental and physical health, which in turn can alleviate the financial burden on the NHS. Additionally, it plays a vital role in helping them integrate into British culture. Clear information and effective communication are often necessary for people to understand their environment and know how to act or react, and this need becomes even more significant when considering individuals with autism.

I would like people to understand that even when autistic people can attend mainstream school, have a job, relationships, children, or a social life, doesn't mean that they have no problems. I would like people to understand that living in a "normal" way is incredibly taxing to an autistic person.

People assume you have a learning disability if you are autistic - it is not clear enough to the public that even non speaking people can be very intelligent.

As someone who has become aware that they are likely to be autistic later in life the lack of support is appalling. Especially from the GP.

'Needs much more support in particular respite on a regular basis does not have to fight for it and regular meetings more info'

'Things are getting better for autistic people but not quickly enough or with enough funding to support the change. Life is still a long way from fun and easy, or even acceptable'.

'Make services more noticeable for parents. Online sessions aren't enough. Kids education is being let down majority'.

'Please change language to be more autism friendly. Identity first language rather than person first is more widely accepted in the autism community.

Eg autistic person rather than person with autism.

Also please refrain from using the medical term ASD as autistic individuals are not disordered. Change the name from ASD resource units as language is key and as with other areas in society where language is no longer considered acceptable this needs changing NOW to help improve understanding in the wider community'.

'Would like people to understand that even when autistic people can attend mainstream school, have a job, relationships, children, or a social life, doesn't mean that they have no problems. I would like people to understand that living in a "normal" way is incredibly taxing to an autistic person'.

Appendix

Methodology

As already mentioned, the survey was open for a period of 6 weeks from 5th June 2023 to 19th July 2023.

The survey was available in printed form on requests. It was communicated through social media posts, emails, residents' bulletins and internal communications at West Berkshire Council.

Respondent Profile

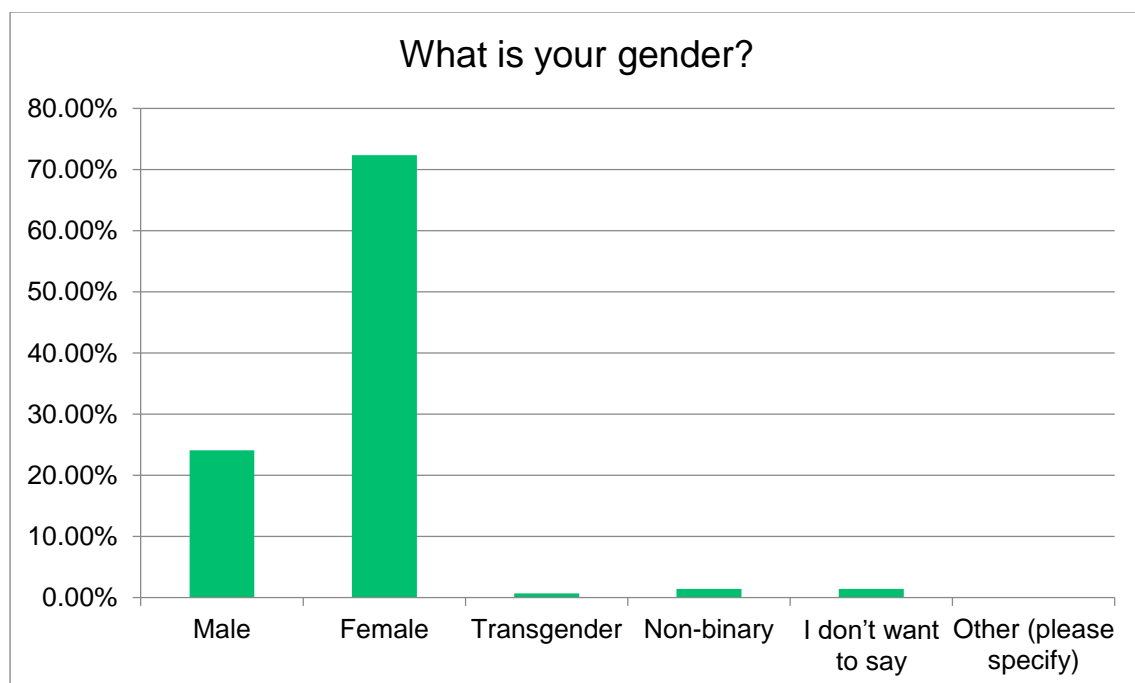
Q1. Are you answering as an Autistic person, or as a parent or carer on behalf of an Autistic adult or child?

139 of the 144 people responded to this question.

48 (34.5%) identified themselves as an Autistic person
91 (65.5%) as a parent or carer on behalf of an Autistic adult or child

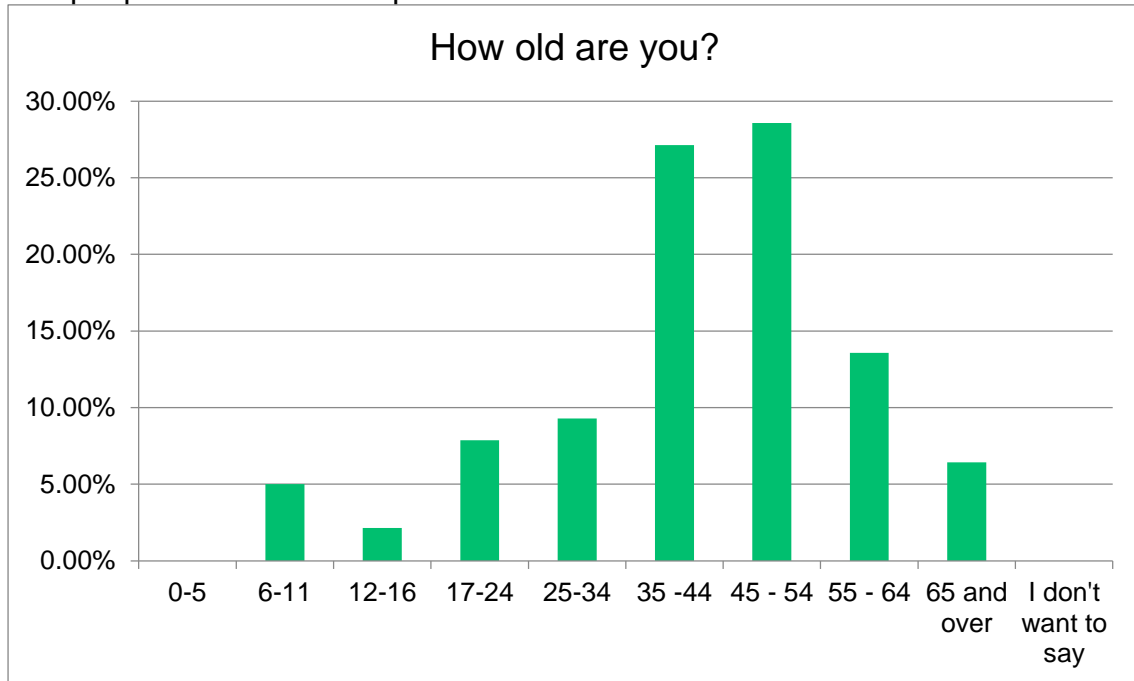
Q2. What is your gender?

141 people responded to this question.



Q3. How old are you?

140 people answered this question.



***OUR SINCERE THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO TOOK TIME TO PARTICIPATE
IN THE SURVEY***

Asset Optimisation Plan

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	11 June 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Tom McCann
Report Author:	Sarah Clarke

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To seek approval from the Executive for the adoption and implementation of the Assets Optimisation Plan, which forms a key component of the Council’s Finance Improvement Plan agreed in December 2025 and supports the Council’s financial recovery and long-term sustainability.

2 Recommendations

Executive is asked to:

1. Approve the Assets Optimisation Plan as the Council’s framework for the review, optimisation and disposal of its asset portfolio, as detailed at Appendix A.
2. Note that the Plan forms a core component of the Finance Improvement Plan approved in December 2025.
3. Delegate authority to progress asset optimisation and disposal proposals in accordance with the governance framework set out in the Plan and in accordance with the Constitution.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>No direct implications. However, the Assets Optimisation Plan is a key mechanism to support the Council’s financial recovery. It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate capital receipts from non-core or surplus assets; • Enable the application of capital receipts, where permissible, to fund transformation activity;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver ongoing revenue savings through estate rationalisation, optimisation of income, co-location and reduced running costs; • Contribute to stabilising the Council’s financial position and reducing reliance on reserves. <p>There are a number of assets that the Council is already in the process of disposing of, which have already been subject to decisions of the Executive. These will deliver anticipated capital receipts in excess of £2m.</p> <p>A £2m capital receipt were to be used to fund the Council’s capital programme, it would reduce the need to borrow and avoid financing costs of circa £80K per annum (based on the Council’s current weighted average cost of capital of 3.92%). It would also avoid future Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for a limited time. Alternatively, capital receipts could be used to fund qualifying transformation projects that deliver ongoing revenue savings.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>There are no immediate direct staffing implications arising from the approval of the Plan. However, subsequent estate rationalisation and service reconfiguration may lead to workforce implications, which will be managed in accordance with HR policies and statutory consultation requirements.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>The implementation of the Plan will require compliance with relevant statutory provisions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (best consideration); • General Disposal Consent 2003 (where applicable); • Subsidy control requirements; <p>All disposals and optimisation decisions will be subject to appropriate legal advice and formal decision-making processes.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Key risks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to realise anticipated capital receipts; • Market volatility affecting asset values; • Service disruption arising from estate rationalisation; • Community or reputational impacts relating to disposal of certain assets. <p>Mitigation will be provided through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust governance via the Assets Board; • A structured pipeline and prioritisation process; • Comprehensive due diligence and business case development; • Programme-level risk monitoring through a dedicated risk register.

Asset Optimisation Plan

Property:	<p>This report directly relates to the Council's property portfolio. The Plan establishes a corporate framework for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing all Council land and buildings; • Identifying surplus or under-utilised assets; • Optimising or disposing of assets to maximise value and efficiency. 			
Policy:	<p>The Plan supports delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance Improvement Plan (December 2025); • The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy; 			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:		X		
ICT Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		

Asset Optimisation Plan

Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The Plan supports the Council's priorities by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring financial sustainability; • Delivering efficient and effective services; • Supporting long-term resilience of the organisation.
Core Business:	X			The Plan ensures that assets are aligned to core service delivery and strategic priorities.
Data Impact:		X		No significant impact identified at this stage
Consultation and Engagement:	GPAW Assets Board, Finance Improvement Group			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report seeks approval for the Assets Optimisation Plan, which establishes a corporate framework for the review and optimisation of the Council's asset portfolio.
- 4.2 The report is brought forward in response to the Council's financial position and the Finance Improvement Plan approved by Executive in December 2025. The Council faces ongoing financial pressures, including structural budget challenges and increasing demand, and must take proactive steps to stabilise its finances and build resilience.
- 4.3 The Plan will:
- Identify opportunities to generate capital receipts from non-core assets;
 - Deliver recurring revenue savings through estate rationalisation and improved utilisation;
 - Ensure that assets are aligned to service requirements and strategic priorities;
 - Provide a structured and transparent pipeline for asset optimisation and disposal;
 - Embed robust governance, assurance and decision-making processes.

Asset Optimisation Plan

- 4.4 Approval of the Plan will provide a key mechanism to support the delivery of the Finance Improvement Plan and contribute to the Council achieving a financially sustainable position.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 This report seeks approval for the Assets Optimisation Plan, which sets out a structured approach to managing the Council's asset base to maximise value, reduce costs and support financial sustainability.

Background

- 5.2 The Council continues to operate within a challenging financial context, with increasing demand for services and ongoing budget pressures.
- 5.3 In December 2025, Executive approved a Finance Improvement Plan which identified a range of measures required to stabilise the Council's financial position and rebuild resilience. A central element of this plan was the need to take a more strategic and proactive approach to asset management.
- 5.4 The Council holds a significant portfolio of land and property assets. While many are essential to service delivery, others are under-utilised, surplus, or capable of being used more effectively. The Assets Optimisation Plan has been developed to address this.
- 5.5 The Assets Optimisation Plan will be supported by the Strategic Asset Management Plan, which will support the identification of the pipeline of assets for review under this Plan.

Proposals

- 5.6 The Assets Optimisation Plan provides a corporate framework to:

1. Review and classify assets

All Council assets will be systematically reviewed and categorised (e.g. operational, investment, surplus), enabling a consistent and evidence-based approach to decision-making.

2. Identify optimisation opportunities

Assets identified as surplus or sub-optimal will be assessed to determine whether they should be:

- (a) Retained and optimised;
- (b) Repurposed for alternative use; or
- (c) Disposed of.

3. Deliver a pipeline of opportunities

Asset Optimisation Plan

A prioritised pipeline of assets will be developed, structured into:

Short-term (quick wins);

Medium-term opportunities;

Long-term / complex projects.

4. Generate financial benefits

The Plan will:

- (a) Deliver capital receipts to support the capital programme and transformation;
- (b) Achieve recurring savings through rationalisation of the estate;
- (c) Reduce maintenance and operational costs.

5. Ensure robust governance

All decisions will be subject to:

- (a) Formal governance through the Assets Board;
- (b) Transparent reporting to the Finance Improvement Group and Executive;
- (c) Compliance with statutory requirements and best value obligations.

- 5.7 In developing the Assets Optimisation Plan, the Council will also seek to maximise opportunities aligned to the One Public Estate (OPE) principle, working collaboratively with public sector partners to ensure that land and property assets are used strategically across organisational boundaries. This approach enables the co-location of services, reduction of duplication within the public estate, and unlocking of wider social, economic and financial benefits. Through partnership working with organisations such as the NHS, emergency services and central government bodies, there is potential to rationalise assets, improve service accessibility for residents, and support place-based outcomes, while also contributing to capital receipts and revenue efficiencies. The adoption of an OPE-informed approach will enhance the Council's ability to deliver both financial sustainability and improved outcomes for communities.

6 Other options considered

6.1 Option 1 – Do Nothing (Not Recommended)

Failure to adopt the Plan would limit the Council's ability to respond to financial pressures and would risk continued inefficiencies within the asset base.

6.2 Option 2 – Ad hoc asset disposals (Not Recommended)

A non-strategic approach would reduce transparency, weaken governance, and may result in sub-optimal financial outcomes.

6.3 Option 3 – Adopt the Assets Optimisation Plan (Recommended)

Asset Optimisation Plan

Provides a structured, transparent and strategic approach aligned to the Finance Improvement Plan.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Assets Optimisation Plan is a critical component of the Council's response to its financial challenges. It provides a governance-led, evidence-based framework to ensure that the Council's assets are used effectively, generate value, and support long-term sustainability.
- 7.2 Approval of the Plan will enable the Council to deliver capital receipts, achieve recurring savings, and strengthen its financial resilience in line with the Finance Improvement Plan agreed in December 2025.

8 Appendices

8.1 Assets Optimisation Plan

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

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

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position:

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Officer details:

Name: Sarah Clarke
Job Title: Executive Director Resources
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ASSETS OPTIMISATION PLAN

1 Purpose and scope

- 1.1 West Berkshire Council approved a Finance Improvement Plan in December 2025, as part of its strategy to become a more financially resilient council. This recognised the need for an Assets Optimisation Plan (the Plan), to ensure that the Council's assets were being used in the most effective manner, and to identify a pipeline of potential disposals. This will sit alongside the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP).
- 1.2 This document sets out a framework to deliver capital receipts, and to generate revenue savings and improved use of the Council's assets.
- 1.3 The Plan will assist with the stabilisation of the revenue position and will rebuild resilience by generating prudent capital receipts from *non-core assets*. This should secure recurrent savings via estate optimisation and protecting and improving community outcomes.
- 1.4 The Plan will consider all of the Council's land and buildings (operational and non-operational), investment properties, surplus sites, development of land and long leases of the Council.
- 1.5 Whilst all land and buildings are in scope, particular care needs to be taken with:
 - (a) Housing assets
 - (b) Community assets
 - (c) Heritage assets

2 Strategic Objectives & Outcomes (over term of MTFS)

- 2.1 The Assets Optimisation Plan has four main objectives:

- (a) Capital Receipts:

Identify and deliver an appropriate programme of capital receipts whilst preserving existing revenue.

- (b) Revenue Savings:

Achieve recurring MTFS savings via estate consolidation, co-location, asset optimisation and efficiency; use Flexible Use of Capital receipts Policy to fund appropriate qualifying transformation costs.

(c) Governance & Best Value:

Evidence robust appraisal, transparency and assurance in line with statutory guidance; publish progress.

(d) Community Safeguards:

Apply balanced approach to community/heritage assets.

3 Asset Baseline and Classification

3.1 A single assets database has been created for purpose of the Plan (to include property description + valuation + title + constraints + energy + service dependency; asset use, current options).

3.2 Properties within the database will be classified as follows are detailed below, together with the value of each category of assets:

	Classification	Purpose	Examples	Value £'m
1.	Operational Assets	<i>Held and occupied to deliver statutory or discretionary services (including leased-in assets)</i>	Council Dwellings: Houses used for social housing Other Land and Buildings: Schools, offices, libraries, depots Carparks	225.8
2.	Investment Properties	<i>Held solely for rental income or capital appreciation rather than service provision.</i>	Investment Portfolio, industrial estates, Farms	45.5
3.	Infrastructure Assets	<i>Held for statutory purpose</i>	Roads, footpaths, bridges, STP, recycling centres	11.9
4.	Community Assets	<i>Assets intended to be held in perpetuity with disposal restrictions</i>	Parks Historic buildings	2.6

5.	Non-Operational Assets	<i>Tangible assets not directly used for service delivery</i>	Community Centres	33.2
6.	Surplus Assets	<i>Assets no longer needed for service delivery but not yet sold</i>	Eg Land at Pheonix and 'Open Space'	1.4
7.	Assets Under Construction	<i>New buildings or infrastructure still being built</i>		-
8.	Heritage Assets	<i>Assets with special qualities held for their contribution to knowledge or culture (e.g., museum exhibits).</i>		2.4
9.	Assets Held for Sale	<i>Specifically identified for disposal within a year.</i>		-

4 Asset Identification and Prioritisation

5.1 Assets identified as surplus or sub-optimal will be prioritised into one of the three categories detailed below.

Pipeline categories:

- **Category A (Quick wins - 0–9 months – by April 2027):** For example, non-operational land, clean title. Enhance estate management to increase revenue collection. Improve aged debt collection to protect revenue.
- **Category B (Medium - 9–24 months – by July 2028):** For example: Office / Industrial sites, investments.
- **Category C (Complex - 24+ months – after July 2028):** Key operational assets, mixed-use, regeneration land requiring planning/Infrastructure, significant legal constraints, including but not limited to joint venture initiatives

5 Optimisation Routes

5.1 If a property has been identified as surplus or suboptimal, and it is considered that an alternative use exists, a business case will be developed to ensure that the proposal is sound and can be delivered. This is where the asset is “repurposed”.

5.2 If a property has been identified as surplus or suboptimal, and it is considered that it should be disposed of, there are a number of options for disposing of property which can be considered, including the following:

- Open market sale which would be the preferred method to secure transparency and best consideration.
- Conditional sale/JV exit with deliverability safeguards where certainty outweighs speculative higher bids.
- Auction (generally only considered for small lots).
- Disposal by way of lease re-gear/assignment (>7 years triggers s.123)

6 Controls, Documentation & Assurance

6.1 Where an asset has been identified as surplus, the following steps will be undertaken to inform decision making:

- Asset Disposal File per asset: Title, valuation reports (unrestricted/restricted), s.123 compliance memo, Best Value statement, subsidy control assessment, equality impact, risk assessment, engagement record, decision log.
- Decisions will be taken by the relevant person or body and recorded under a delegated authority or Executive approval.

6.2 The controls are designed to ensure that all aspects of the disposal process are properly documented and managed in accordance with regulatory and organisational requirements. RegSular monitoring and thorough record-keeping will help to mitigate the risks associated with asset disposal, ensuring compliance and supporting transparency throughout the decision-making process.

7 Governance & Decision Controls

Programme Governance

- GPAW – Assets Board: Monthly report to review pipeline, new proposals, milestones, receipts and risks
- GPAW Assets Programme Risk Register: to measure status, target receipt, quarter of completion, dependencies, risks, mitigations.
- The GPAW Assets Board will provide regular updates to the Finance Improvement Group, which will in turn report to Executive to ensure that appropriate and regular updates are provided regarding the progress and implementation of this plan.
- Any key decisions to be taken as indicated in Appendix A and in line with existing legal and Constitutional parameters

- The timeline for the delivery of actions detailed in the plan is set out at Appendix B

Appendix A — Decision Flow Chart

- Is the asset essential to statutory delivery within 5 years?
 - If yes → Retain/Optimise.
 - If no → proceed.
- Can best consideration be achieved soon (clean title, viable market)?
 - If yes → Dispose.
 - If no: Is there a strong, evidenced well-being case?
 - If yes and undervalue ≤£2m → Consider General Disposal Consent 2003.
- Is planning uplift/JV value material?
 - If yes → JV/Development route (subject to Prudential/PWLB constraints).
- Is the site open space?
 - If yes - Ensure advertisements and objection handling before any decision.

Appendix B – Delivery Timeline

Delivery Timeline

Month 0–3 (By September 2026):

- Executive adopts the Assets Optimisation Plan
- Review pipeline
- Commence due diligence

• Month 3–9 (By April 2027):

- Market Category A assets
- Develop business cases for Category A assets where an alternative use is identified
- Receipts applied to capitalisation / transformation projects
- Develop Pipeline on Category B properties

• Month 9–24 (By July 2028):

- Category B disposals
- Develop business cases for Category B assets where an alternative use is identified
- Receipts applied to capitalisation / transformation projects
- continued assurance reporting

• 24+ months (After July 2028):

- Category C reviewed
- Periodic refresh of pipeline
- Asset Optimisation Plan review and update

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Agenda Item 10.

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