



CHADDLEWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to The Parish Council: Mr David Jennings

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MINUTES

Tuesday 12th May 2026, Chaddleworth Parish Council meeting held in Chaddleworth Village Hall, Upper End, Chaddleworth, RG20 7DY

Councillors Present: Cllr. G. Beard, Cllr. K. Brady, Cllr. P. Hambro, Cllr. S. McAllister-Lovelock,
Cllr. A. Woodroffe

Clerk: Mr D Jennings

Members of the Public: none

1. **ANNUAL MEETING: ELECTION OF THE CHAIR and VICECHAIR** for forthcoming year.
 - 1.1. Cllr. G Beard asked whether any other Councillor would like to put themselves forward for the Chair role. None did.
 - 1.2. Cllr. G Beard was nominated and seconded as Chair for the forthcoming year and this was **unanimously supported**.
 - 1.3. Cllr. P. Hambro was nominated and seconded as Vice-Chair for the forthcoming year and this was **unanimously supported**.
 - 1.4. The chairman and vice chairman signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
2. **APOLOGIES**: Received from Cllr. P. King, ward member Cllr. C. Hooker.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS**: Cllr. S. McAllister-Lovelock declared an interest on part of item 17.
4. **MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**: The minutes of the previous meetings held on 3rd March 2026 and 31st March 2026 were agreed by Councillors present and duly signed by Chair Cllr G. Beard.
5. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**: None.
6. **ANNUAL MEETING:**
 - 6.1. **Members Interest Form**: the chairman and vice chairman completed the register of interests form. No other councillors declared amendments to their accepted register of interests on record.
 - 6.2. **Appointment of Councillors to Committees and Outside Bodies**
 - 6.2.1. Public Rights of Way representative: Cllr. S. McAllister-Lovelock
 - 6.2.2. Chaddleworth Village Hall representative: Cllr. G. Beard
 - 6.2.3. Chaddleworth & Shefford Federated Schools (&PTFA) representative: Cllr. G. Beard
 - 6.2.4. Saunders Wynn and Coventry Educational Foundation representative: Cllr. S. McAllister-Lovelock
 - 6.2.5. The Downland Practice Patient Participation Group representative: Cllr. A. Woodroffe, noting that if a daytime meeting needs cover that Clerk can do so.
 - 6.2.6. Cllr. G. Beard noted that RAF Welford may be seeking a local liaison and kindly volunteered to ask them about this.
 - 6.2.7. Cllr. K. Brady noted that a liaison with the Chaddleworth Entertainments Committee is needed and kindly volunteered to take this position.
 - 6.3. **Standard Documents and Policies**
 - 6.3.1. The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations for the forthcoming year were **approved unanimously** and adopted for the forthcoming year.
 - 6.3.2. The Asset Register was **approved unanimously** and adopted for the forthcoming year – Appendix 1.
 - 6.3.3. The Risk Assessment was **approved unanimously** and adopted for forthcoming year with one amendment to the level of Public Liability risk assessment.

- 6.3.4. The Other Policies reviewed for any amendments needed, **approved unanimously** and adopted for the forthcoming year – Appendix 2 lists the policies.
- 6.4. **Meeting Dates:** the dates, times and place of ordinary meetings of the full Council for the year ahead and for the Annual Parish Meeting (The meeting acts as an annual democratic point of communication enabling the Parish Council to explain what it has been doing over the last year and providing an opportunity for the electors to have their say on anything they consider is important to the people of the Parish) were agreed. The dates are: 7th July 2026, 8th September 2026, 3rd November 2026, 5th January 2027 and 2nd March 2027 (each Ordinary meetings) and 11th May 2027 (the Annual Meeting). The Annual Parish Meeting is 25th May 2027.

7. PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED:

- 7.1. None received.
- 7.2. Note: planning application received 26/00922/PACOU, Two Acre Dairy, Manor Farm, Chaddleworth, Newbury, Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Change of use of agricultural building to a flexible commercial use (namely Use Class B8 - storage or distribution). This is an application for Prior Approval under The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). Because we are required to inform nearby residents and display a public notice West Berkshire Council is notifying the Parish/Town Council of the proposal in case interested parties should contact you. However, you are not required to comment and the decision can only be taken based on the criteria set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended).
- 7.3. Note: planning application 26/00515/HOUSE, Orchard House, Chaddleworth, Newbury, RG20 7DY, Section 73 application to vary conditions 2 (Approved Plans) and 4 (EPS Licence) of approved was granted 05Mar2026 with caveat 'the development hereby permitted shall be begun before 2 October 2027.'
- 7.4. Note: planning application 26/00278/CERTE, Two Acre Dairy, Manor Farm, Chaddleworth, Newbury, excavation and formation of an agricultural yard was granted a Certificate of Lawful Existing Development.
- 7.5. It was noted that the Chaddleworth Parish Council website Planning Process page now includes a map of local planning applications planning consideration and it was suggested that this would be a good item for Chaddleworth News.
<https://www.chaddleworthparish.gov.uk/community/chaddleworth-parish-council-20938/planning-process/>

8. FINANCE:

- 8.1. The End of Year finance for year 2025-2026 was reviewed and **unanimously accepted** (appendix 3).
- 8.2. The Budget vs Expenditure for year 2026-2027 to date was reviewed and **unanimously accepted** (appendix 4).
- 8.3. The payments and receipts since last meeting were reviewed and **unanimously accepted** (appendix 5).
- 8.4. It was noted that Cllr. P. Hambro has kindly completed a verification of the bank reconciliations for all accounts for 2025-2026 Year End with the Clerk/RFO achieving the Financial Regulations 2.6 '*At least at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the council.*

9. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR):**

- 9.1. **Internal Audit** – the report from the Internal Auditor was received and noted. Their selection for the next year was **approved unanimously**.
- 9.1.1. It is reported and noted that the back-pay arising from the pay review agreed by the National Joint Council was not implemented until the start of the following financial year. This is at the choice of this Clerk and is not a general policy.
- 9.1.2. It is reported and noted that Councillors do not have associated email addresses, but this is not currently a requirement.
- 9.2. **Certificate of Exemption** for submission to the External Auditor due to being under the £25,000 threshold – AGAR 2025/26 From 2: The Council reviewed and **unanimously approved** the Certificate of Exemption. Chair Cllr G. Beard signed it.
- 9.3. **Annual Governance Statement** – AGAR 2025/26 Section 1: The Council reviewed that the questions are answered accordingly and **unanimously approved** the. Chair Cllr G. Beard signed it.
- 9.4. **Accounting Statements** – AGAR 2025/26 Section 2: The Council reviewed and **unanimously approved** the Statements. Chair Cllr G. Beard signed them.
- 9.5. It was noted that the associated **Explanation of Variances** and **Bank Reconciliation** are also included.
- 9.6. **Electors' Rights** – the dates of the Exercise of Public Rights were noted as commencing Monday 15th June 2026 to Monday 24th July 2026 (which have to be for 30 working days and include the first 10 working days of July).

10. **ACTION ITEMS:**

- 10.1. The Council has suggested that a second admin@ChaddleworthParish.gov.uk account should be available for contingency in case access to the main Clerk account is unavailable. **Action:** Clerk to contact service provider to arrange a suitable contingency.
- 10.2. The insurance renewal from Clear Councils has been received. Cllr. G. Beard kindly agreed to check the documents provided, the cover included, that these match and are suitable for the Risk Assessment. It was also suggested that it should be clear which parties are responsible for risk assessments for typical events and that it is clear that these are shared between stakeholders. **Action:** Cllr. G. Beard.

11. **CHADDLEWORTH COMMUNITY PLAN:**

- 11.1. The strong community support for a 20MPH limit in Chaddleworth was noted. It was also noted that West Berkshire Council have updated on the in their recent District Parish Conference meeting. Cllr. G. Beard suggested contacting our Ward Member and WBC to discover what next steps can be taken. **Action:** Cllr. G. Beard.
- 11.2. All Councillors might review the 'Chaddleworth Community Plan Briefing for Chaddleworth Parish Council' (included in the previous meeting's minutes) to identify the included ideas they would help to implement and/or those which might be most readily implemented by the Council & Clerk soonest. **Action:** All.

12. **CLLR G. STANLEY MEMORIAL**

- 12.1. The Plaque specification is received from Guy Stevens via Cllr. K. Brady and is being verified.
- 12.2. The wording for the Plaque wording is to be devised and confirmed.
- 12.3. The soil's pH is to be tested. It is understood that an Acer does not thrive in lime/chalk alkaline soil of pH7 and above. Penwood Nurseries have suggested some alternatives of which Amelanchier Lamarckii has year-round interest and Arbutus Strawberry Tree is also a good option. These options to be checked with the involved parties.
- 12.4. Autumn planting is suggested by when the plaque should be prepared.

13. **MAINTENANCE**

- 13.1. The requested maintenance to the War Memorial is to be completed. **Action:** Cllr. K. Brady (carried).
- 13.2. Proofs for new play area, playing field, car park and bins were reviewed and **unanimously approved** with some minor wording updates. A suggested parish emblem was well appreciated and will be included if possible. **Action:** Clerk

14. FURTHER PARISH COUNCIL POLICY UPDATES

- 14.1. Environment to be drafted. Action: Cllr. G. Beard.
- 14.2. Adult safeguarding and prevention of antisocial behaviour information reviewed **unanimously approved** with some minor wording updates. Action closed.
- 14.3. Community Emergency Plans: The national template and JEPU guidance to assist in discussing and forming a community plan has been provided by West Berkshire Council. The Council unanimously agreed that this should be looked into and therefore included in the Parish Council Policy. A lead and small working group are needed for this, possibly from the community and utilising examples from other parishes. This role might be advertised in Chaddleworth News.
Action: All, Clerk.

15. WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL ITEMS:

- 15.1. Ward Member Cllr. C. Hooker has provided an annual review (Appendix 6) in addition to the regular report.
- 15.2. The WBC District Parish Conference was held on 29th April 2026. Cllr. G. Beard and Clerk attended. The topics covered included the 'Report a Problem' dashboard, 'Viable Villages' project initial shape, 'Town and Parish Local Offer' update, and 'Local Government Re-Organisation' update.

16. COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS:

- 16.1. Cllr. K. Brady reported that he has heard complaints of an overgrown footpath between Norris Lane and Chaddleworth House field. Cllr. S. McAllister-Lovelock will investigate and advise.
- 16.2. Cllr. S. McAllister-Lovelock and Cllr. P. Hambro reported receiving complaints that on a number of Sundays the Hangmans Stone Sporting Clays have begun shooting before 10:00 and continued well after 13:30, even until 14:45. It was agreed that a letter should be written to them to relay this and to seek that they adhere to their permitted operating hours. **Action:** Clerk.
- 16.3. Cllr. S. McAllister-Lovelock reported from the recent Saunders Wynn and Coventry Educational Foundation meeting that grants were considered and awarded fully, awarded partial and not awarded.
- 16.4. Cllr. A. Woodroffe reported attending the recent Downland Practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) meeting.
- 16.5. Cllr. G. Beard reported laying an RBL poppy wreath on behalf of the parish at the RAF Welford Memorial Service 31st March 2026.

17. CLERK'S REPORT

- 17.1. The Clerk reported rounding up and reporting the fly-tipped tyres at the top of Buckham Hill. These were removed by WBC.
- 17.2. And that the old Metro accounts are closed, the reserve account updated for 26/27, the first precept for 26/27 received and the latest VAT reclaim to 31Mar26 made.
- 17.3. And reminded that the Council are scheduled to hold the Annual Parish Meeting (AKA the Assembly and not to be confused with the Annual Meeting of the Council), which according to the Local Government Act 1972 must take place between March 1st and June 1st, on Tuesday 26th May. The meeting is chaired by the Parish Council Chair, or in their absence, the Vice-Chair or a elected attendee. **Action:** Chair and Clerk to display and send out a notice to the community teams.
- 17.4. A grant application was received from Chaddleworth Cricket Club for the start-up and four-year operation of a defibrillator at the pavilion. The Council agreed that the project is of clear benefit to the parish, as the defibrillator is publicly accessible and properly registered. The Council confirmed that it would be willing to support the start-up costs but not the ongoing operational costs. However, the application could not be approved as it was submitted retrospectively, which is not permitted under the Council's adopted Grant Allocation Policy. The Council therefore agreed to include a review of the Grant Allocation Policy on the agenda for the next meeting, and to invite Chaddleworth Cricket Club to reapply following that review.

18. MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION:

- 18.1. It was agreed that a review of the Council Grant Allocation Policy be included in the next meeting's agenda.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next planned meeting is the Ordinary Meeting to be held Tuesday 7th July 2026 at 7:30pm in Chaddleworth Village Hall.

20. Appendix 1: Register of Assets

CHADDLEWORTH PARISH COUNCIL			
REGISTER OF ASSETS			
May 2026			
	Value at Purchase	Date of Purchase	Age (whole Y)
Playground Multi-Play Unit (Playdale Twist)	£13,759	Sep 03	22
Playground Hamlets Giggleswick Multitplay	£7,669	unknown	unknown
Playground two swings and two cradle swings	£6,212	Jul 25	0
Playground Embankment Slide	£1,473	Feb 09	17
Playground Tunnel with bicycle value	£1	May 21	5
Playground Sprung Rider	£1	unknown	unknown
Playground Fence (renovated)	£3,059	Apr 25	1
Sports Field Goals & Nets	£363	Jan 23	3
Sports Field Fence	£1	unknown	unknown
War Memorial & Bus Shelter Land	£1,000	unknown	unknown
War Memorial	£1	unknown	unknown
Tommy Memorial Statue	£200	May 22	4
Bus Shelter (built by Murphy Enterprises)	£2,866	Jan 05	21
Grit Bins (9 of these)	£1,000	unknown	unknown
Phone Box	£1,000	unknown	unknown
Defibrillator and Cabinet (opposite The IbeX Inn)	£1,400	unknown	unknown
Defibrillator and Cabinet (Chaddleworth Village Hall)	£750	Oct 23	2
Memorial Garden Arbor and Fencing	£250	May 22	4
Parish Council Noticeboard	£312	Jun 20	5
Clerk Laptop	£360	May 17	9
Clerk Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration	£165	Sep 23	2
Chaddleworth Village Speed Awareness Gates (renovated)	£2,920	Feb 24	2
Total	£44,761		
<i>Note: values above are inc-VAT</i>			

Note: Assets audited November 2024 (pictures taken).

21. Appendix 2: Standard Documents and Policies

Policy	Version	Adopted	Reviewed
General Privacy Notice	2.0	13Jan26	12May26
Code of Conduct for Councillors	2.0	12May26	12May26
Standing Orders	1.0	03Mar26	12May26
Financial Regulations	1.0	13Jan26	12May26
Reserves Policy 26-27	2.0	12May26	12May26
Risk Assessment 26-27	1.0	05May25	12May26
Grant Allocation Policy	1.0	02Sep25	12May26
Complaints Procedure	1.0	28May24	12May26
Freedom of Information and Publication Guide	2.0	03Mar26	12May26
Data Protection Policy	1.0	13Jan26	12May26
Data Map	1.0	13Jan26	12May26
Data Protection Appropriate Policy Document	1.0	29Dec25	12May26
Information Technology (IT) Policy	2.0	12May26	12May26
Freedom of Information Model Publication Scheme	1.2	23Oct15	12May26
Health and Safety Policy	1.0	12May26	12May26

22. Appendix 3: Budget vs Expenditure –2025-2026 End of Year

Chaddleworth Parish Council				100%	part of year
Expenditure vs Budget 2025/2026					
Receipts	To Date	Budget 2025/2026	%	Delta	
	£	£			
Precept	£ 15,000.00	£ 15,000.00	100%		
Bank Interest	£ 115.58	£ -			
Member Bid		£ -			
CIL funding	£ 7,124.78	£ -	New		
Sundry		£ -			
VAT reclaim	£ 2,230.35	£ 1,600.00			
Total	£ 24,470.71	£ 16,600.00	147%		£ 7,871
Payments					
	To Date	Budget 2025/2026			
	£	£			
Salaries					
Salary	£ 5,394.48	£ 5,400.00	100%		
Pension	£ -	£ -			
Sub-total	£ 5,394.48	£ 5,400.00	100%		
General Office & Administration					
Clerk Expenses	£ -	£ 200.00	0%		
Councillor Expenses	£ -	£ 50.00	0%		
Postage and Stationery	£ 51.29	£ 100.00	51%		
Subscriptions and Training	£ 352.86	£ 400.00	88%		
Parish Insurance	£ 584.61	£ 500.00	117%	note 1	
Newsletter Printing	£ 850.45	£ 1,100.00	77%		
Hire of Halls	£ 125.00	£ 200.00	63%		
Website Hosting and Email	£ 207.93	£ 350.00	59%		
Bank Fee	£ 12.01	£ -	New	note 4	
Audit	£ 160.00	£ 175.00	91%		
GDPR registration	£ 47.00	£ 40.00	118%	note 1	
Sub-total	£ 2,391.15	£ 3,115.00	77%		
Open Spaces					
Churchyard Maintenance	£ 197.98	£ 200.00	99%	2.02	
Field Rents	£ 350.00	£ 350.00	100%		
Grass Cutting & Roadside Maintenance	£ 2,157.07	£ 3,000.00	72%		
Playground Inspection	£ -	£ 110.00	0%		
Playground Repairs	£ 9,726.89	£ 2,000.00	486%	note 2	
Dog/Litter Waste Bins	£ 664.32	£ 750.00	89%		
Memorial Garden	£ 105.94	£ 250.00	42%		
Grit Bins	£ 212.16	£ 300.00	71%		
Village Repairs Budget	£ -	£ 1,000.00	0%		
Defibrillator	£ 107.00	£ -	New	note 3	
Sub-total	£ 13,521.36	£ 7,960.00	170%		
Donations	£ 1,640.00	£ 1,630.00	101%		
VE-Day 80th	£ 650.00	£ 1,000.00	65%		
Neighbourhood Plan	£ 1,095.45	£ 1,500.00			
		£ -			
Total	£ 24,692.44	£ 20,605.00	120%		£ 4,087

Overbudget item notes:

- 22.1. An increase in supplier costs (future budget to change)
- 22.2. Unexpected necessary work not included in the original budget (fence and swing replacements), covered by CIL funding
- 22.3. Battery replaced in this year rather than last.
- 22.4. The bank has introduced a monthly current account fee.

23. Appendix 4: Budget vs Expenditure –2026-2027 Year to Date

Chaddleworth Parish Council				
Expenditure vs Budget 2026/2027				
			8%	part of year
Receipts	To Date	Budget 2026/2027	%	Delta
	£	£		
Precept	£ 9,000.00	£ 18,000.00	50%	
Bank Interest	£ 14.22			
Member Bid	£ -			
CIL funding	£ -			
Sundry	£ -			
VAT reclaim	£ 375.80	£ 2,000.00		
Total	£ 9,390.02	£ 20,000.00	47%	-£ 10,610
Payments	To Date	Budget 2026/2027		
	£	£		
<u>Salaries</u>				
Salary	£ 464.10	£ 5,600.00	8%	
Pension	£ -	£ -		
Sub-total	£ 464.10	£ 5,600.00	8%	
<u>General Office & Administration</u>				
Clerk Expenses	£ -	£ 200.00	0%	
Councillor Expenses	£ -	£ 50.00	0%	
Postage and Stationery	£ -	£ 100.00	0%	
Subscriptions and Training	£ 127.48	£ 300.00	42%	
Parish Insurance	£ -	£ 650.00	0%	
Newsletter Printing	£ -	£ 1,200.00	0%	
Hire of Halls	£ -	£ 200.00	0%	
Website Hosting and Email	£ 14.98	£ 400.00	4%	
Bank Fee	£ 3.00		New	note 1
Audit	£ -	£ 175.00	0%	
GDPR registration	£ -	£ 60.00	0%	
Sub-total	£ 145.46	£ 3,335.00	4%	
<u>Open Spaces</u>				
Churchyard Maintenance	£ -	£ 200.00	0%	
Field Rents	£ -	£ 350.00	0%	
Grass Cutting & Roadside Maintenance	£ 281.35	£ 2,500.00	11%	
Playground Inspection	£ -	£ 200.00	0%	
Playground Repairs	£ -	£ 2,000.00	0%	
Dog/Litter Waste Bins	£ 55.36	£ 850.00	7%	
Memorial Garden	£ -	£ 250.00	0%	
Grit Bins	£ -	£ 300.00	0%	
Village Repairs Budget	£ -	£ 1,000.00	0%	
Defibrillator	£ -	£ -		
Sub-total	£ 336.71	£ 7,650.00	4%	
Donations	£ -	£ 1,630.00	0%	
National Event	£ -	£ 500.00	0%	
Neighbourhood Plan	£ -	£ 3,000.00	0%	
		£ -		
Total	£ 946.27	£ 21,715.00	4%	-£ 20,769

Overbudget item notes:

23.1. The bank has introduced a monthly current account fee after budget was set.

24. Appendix 5: Payments and Receipts Since Last Meeting

Statement of Accounts 2025/2026			
Payment and Receipts 03Mar26 to 04May2026			
Payments			
Date	Description	Amount	Budget Area
04 Mar 26	CHADDLEWORTH VILLAGE HALL 2026.063 Yogis	£ 175.00	Neighbourhood Plan
13 Mar 26	GOCARDLESS	£ 2.99	Website Hosting and Email
17 Mar 26	GOCARDLESS	£ 11.99	Website Hosting and Email
24 Mar 26	Chaddleworth Parochial Church Counc CPC for Chuchyard	£ 125.00	Churchyard Maintenance
25 Mar 26	MRS ANDERSON CHADDLEWORTH PARIS	£ 20.00	Dog/Litter Waste Bins
25 Mar 26	MR DAVID JENNINGS CPC CLERK SALARY	£ 449.54	Salary
25 Mar 26	BIBBY COMMERCIAL FINANCE LIMITED SE SI-5343	£ 35.36	Dog/Litter Waste Bins
26 Mar 26	SCOFELL COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPES INVOICE 38681	£ 281.35	Grass Cutting & Roadside Maintenance
27 Mar 26	Bank Fee	£ 3.00	Bank Fee
31 Mar 26	THE ALPHA XPERIENCE Inv 00014945	£ 134.75	Newsletter Printing
13 Apr 26	GOCARDLESS	£ 2.99	Website Hosting and Email
17 Apr 26	GOCARDLESS	£ 11.99	Website Hosting and Email
27 Apr 26	MRS ANDERSON CHADDLEWORTH PARIS	£ 20.00	Dog/Litter Waste Bins
27 Apr 26	MR DAVID JENNINGS CPC CLERK SALARY	£ 464.10	Salary
27 Apr 26	BIBBY COMMERCIAL FINANCE LIMITED SE SI-5509	£ 35.36	Dog/Litter Waste Bins
28 Apr 26	Bank Fee	£ 3.00	Bank Fee
29 Apr 26	SCOFELL COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPES INVOICE 38918	£ 281.35	Grass Cutting & Roadside Maintenance
29 Apr 26	HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COU INV-8348	£ 127.48	Subscriptions and Training
Total		£ 2,185.25	
Receipts			
28 Apr 26	WEST BERKS COUNCIL-601507-65453468 765414-WEST	£ 9,000.00	Precept
01 May 26	HMRC VTR-200517-53992543 446207-HMRC VTR-&--&-XS	£ 375.80	VAT reclaim
Total		£ 9,375.80	

25. Appendix 6: Ward Member Cllr. C. Hooker Annual Review



Annual Council Report for Municipal Year 2025-26

Written by your local Conservative team to keep you up to date.

Councillor Clive Hooker Downlands Ward

West Berkshire Council

Local Government Reorganisation

Where we are now?

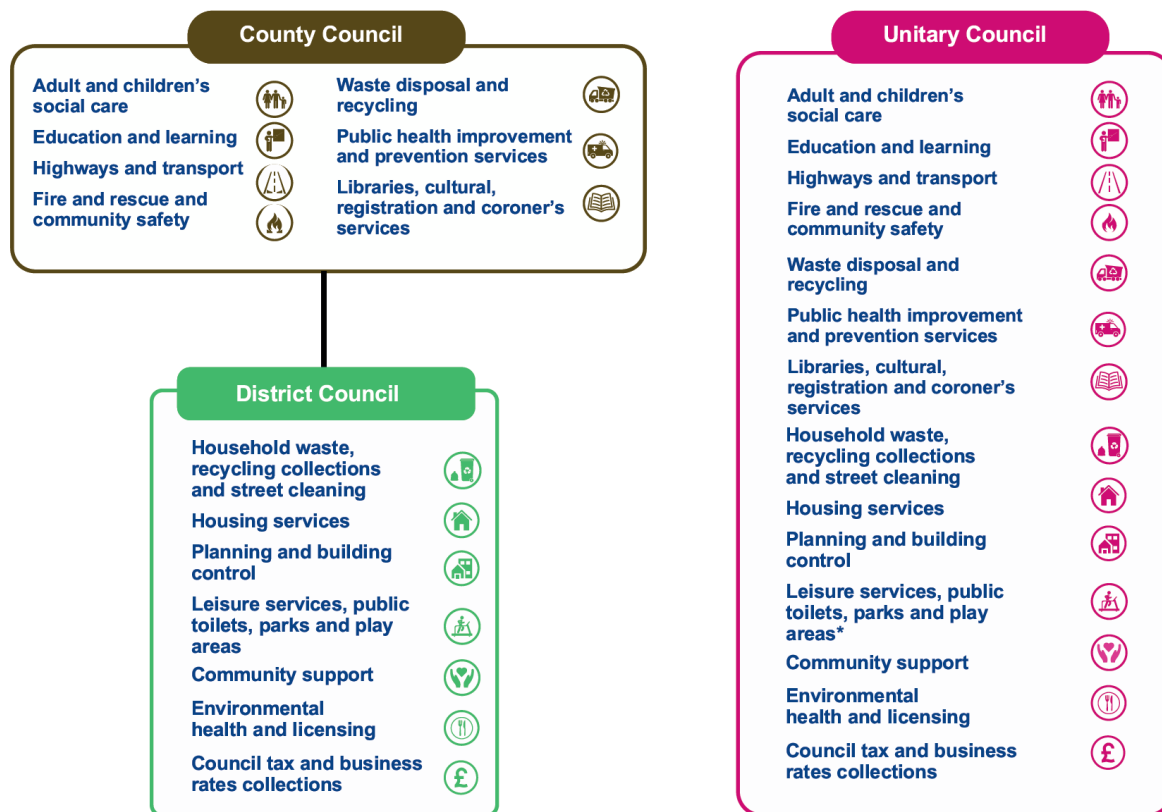
Local Government Reorganisation is probably the biggest thing going on in Local Government at the moment, affecting many different council areas.

Whilst West Berkshire isn't in one of the immediate areas for reorganisation, we are interested in a proposal which involves us as part of the Oxfordshire reorganisation.

The consultation has now closed and the responses are being reviewed by HM Government. We are expecting to know their decision by summer, but no firm date has been given and other councils have experienced delays and changes as instability in the Ministry has had effects on work progress.

What is changing?

The move is in response to a government invitation following its [announcement in December 2024](#) to end two-tier authorities like those in Oxfordshire. As part of the shake-up of local councils, the government has also indicated all unitary authorities will need to serve around 500,000 residents or more, which will require West Berkshire Council - which covers around 170,000 people - to merge with neighbouring councils.



What are the proposals?

The government asked the existing councils to develop proposals for them to consider. There were three proposals submitted to government:

A single county unitary that covers all of Oxfordshire.

Two unitary councils that cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. One covering the existing council areas of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire. One covering the existing council areas of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.

Three unitary councils that cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. One covering the existing Oxford City council area but with expanded boundaries. One covering the remaining existing council areas of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire. One covering the remaining existing council areas of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.

Why is this important to businesses in West Berkshire?

Councils have a significant impact on local businesses from strategic work like driving economic growth and housing growth through to provide support to individual businesses and managing town centres. The choice made by the government could impact all of these services for decades to come and so making the right decision for West Berkshire businesses is important.

What do the current councils think is the best option?

Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Berkshire and West Oxfordshire overwhelmingly support the two unitary option. 142 out of 158 councillors in attendance at those councils voted to support submitting the two unitary proposal including councillors from all political parties.

Oxfordshire County Council support their single unitary proposal and Oxford City Council support their three unitary proposal.

Why does WBC support the two unitary option?

WBC believes that the two unitary proposal is the only one that will deliver improvements to council services, will be financially sustainable, will be responsive to communities and will deliver economic growth.

WBC believe this about creating councils of the right size – not too big that they are distant and ineffective, not too small that they aren't financially viable. When councillors considered the proposals they felt the two unitary was the one that best met the government criteria and would deliver the best outcomes for West Berkshire businesses.



Want to find out more?

Each proposal has its own website with more information:

[One Council - Oxford County Council](#)

[Two Councils - West Berkshire, Vale of the White Horse, South Oxford, Cherwell District Council, West Oxford District Council.](#)

[Three Councils - Oxford City Council](#)

Financial Troubles

Last year, West Berkshire Council requested Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to help balance its budget. This was granted, and part of the agreement for the EFS was for the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to investigate the Council's spending.

The CIPFA report was damning and strongly criticised the Liberal Democrat administration's financial management. This report's findings were rejected by the Leader and Executive.

This year, the Council is still in difficulties and, having rejected the findings, needed to ask for another bailout from HM Government.

At the Council meeting on 29 January, the Liberal Democrats proposed a motion to ask the Liberal Democrat Leader to write a letter requesting help, but in doing so continued to ignore the CIPFA findings and blamed HM Government for the mess they are in.

The Conservative group chose not to attend this meeting. Antagonising HM Government when another bailout is needed seems a silly idea, not to mention that the Leader does not need permission from Council to write a letter asking for help – which comes at an additional cost to the taxpayer.

Read more here: <https://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/tories-to-boycott-west-berkshire-council-budget-meeting-9450864/> and <https://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/council-in-cash-meltdown-as-redundancies-are-on-the-agenda-9451022/>

Upgrading Schools

Falkland Primary School construction work progressing well

Work at Falkland Primary School is continuing at a good pace, despite some disruption from the weather. Since November, persistent rain has caused around three weeks of delay, but good progress has still been made.

The foundations are now complete, along with the floor and timber frame. This means the building is starting to take shape, and you can now walk through it and see how the rooms will be laid out.

Over the next few weeks, steel columns will be put place, the roof covering will begin, and work will on the internal floors and staircase.

To help make up for time lost to the rain and keep on track, there will be some limited weekend working. This will help ensure the building is finished and ready for people to move in before the Autumn Term starts in September.



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32 new SEND places at Castle School

The expansion of The Castle School in Newbury is now nearing completion. This is a major milestone in ongoing investment in high quality learning environments for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



The brand-new Barbury House, named after an Iron Age hillfort in Wiltshire called Barbury Castle, will provide 32 vital SEND places for pupils aged 2 to 19 with complex needs. This expansion not only increases capacity but also enhances the school's specialist offer, with thoughtfully designed breakout spaces and group rooms to better support tailored learning, wellbeing, and care.

By creating more SEND places locally, the new building will also deliver significant financial benefits. Each placement at Barbury House is estimated to save around £80,000 per year compared to an out of district alternative, ensuring that more West Berkshire children can receive the support they need close to home.

Delivering for the Environment

Bee Bus Shelters

Bus Passengers across West Berkshire are beginning to benefit from new bus shelters being installed, helping to improve the Public Transport experience. WBC have provided funding to town and parish councils who are responsible for maintaining shelters.

Many of the shelters have green roofs helping to contribute towards efforts to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. It follows feedback from bus surveys, where residents said the condition of bus stops influences how they travel.



These improvements are made possible by funding from HM Government, given to the Council after submission of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Electrical reuse scheme launches at recycling centres

WBC have teamed up, in partnership with Veolia, with Green Machine Computers to launch an exciting new electrical reuse scheme at both Household Waste Recycling Centres in Newtown Road and Padworth.



Residents can now drop off used mobile phones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers at dedicated collection points at either site, giving their old devices a new lease of life.

Once collected, Green Machine Computers will securely remove any data before passing reusable items to The Tech Hub in Hungerford. From there, they will be made available free of charge or at low cost to charities and people in need, ensuring technology reaches those who need it most.

Changes to Bin Collections

The Liberal Democrats made a change to black bin collections in West Berkshire. From last year, black bins are now collected every three weeks instead of every fortnight.

It's important to note that these changes will **not** affect:

- Households with communal bin stores (e.g. flats)
- Weekly food waste collections; and
- Fortnightly recycling and garden waste collections

At the end of last year, there was a consultation in which most people voted [against](#) the change to reduce black bin collections to once every three weeks instead of every fortnight. Despite clear opposition, the administration decided to press ahead with the changes.

Residents who have a large family and/or have someone in the home who has a medical condition that generates a significant volume of unrecyclable waste, can [apply for extra rubbish capacity here](#).

U Turn on Resource Centres

The Liberal Democrats announced that they are uturning and now plan to continue to run the Resource Centres directly, following pressure from residents and opposition councillors.

To ensure long-term sustainability, they will be co-locating complementary services within the same buildings - keeping services affordable, connected, and close to home.

It is hoped this decision will ensure residents receive high-quality, accessible, and cost-effective support.

Continuing Successful Projects

The previous Conservative Administration of WBC (Pre 2023) started a number of schemes and projects which we are proud are continuing with success and providing benefits to local residents and their communities.

Bikeability

WBC are continuing to run Bikeability training courses during school holidays for children and sometimes adults too.

All courses are run by DBS checked, fully-qualified Bikeability instructors and currently cost £25 per course. The child's bike must be fully road-worthy and the right size. The instructors have the right to refuse training if the bike is deemed unsafe.

More information and how to book is available [here](#).

Soil Conditioner

WBC have now held eight soil conditioner give-aways on where residents could collect free, peat-free, PAS 100 certified soil conditioner produced locally from West Berkshire's garden waste.

No appointment is required to attend these give-away events, just proof of address, such as an ID card or recent utility bill, to confirm they live in West Berkshire.

The soil conditioner is provided loose, for residents to fill into their own bags, boxes or containers.

This is always a popular event so with many queues during busy periods and short delays while containers are refilled.

Home composting is a simple, cost-effective way to turn garden and kitchen waste into nutrient-rich compost for plants. By composting at home, residents reduce the amount of waste sent for disposal and create a natural soil improver that helps gardens thrive. Most garden waste, fruit and vegetable peelings, tea bags, coffee grounds, and even shredded paper can go into a compost bin. Avoid cooked food, meat, and dairy, as these can attract pests.

With the right mix of "greens" (like grass cuttings and food scraps) and "browns" (like twigs and cardboard), healthy compost will be ready in a few months.

1. Reduce waste and save money

composting diverts food and garden waste from your black bin saving vital space for non-recyclable items it's a free alternative to paid garden waste services, turning your waste into a valuable resource

2. Create free fertiliser

compost is rich in nutrients and improves soil structure, moisture retention, and plant health use it in your garden beds, pots, or as mulch - no need to buy chemical fertilisers

3. Help the environment

it supports biodiversity by improving soil health and feeding beneficial organisms

4. Easy to start

you can compost using a bin, a pile, or even trench composting directly in your garden West Berkshire residents can buy compost bins from the [Get Composting website](#)

[Recycle Now](#) provide great tips and useful advice to get your compost bin started.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

The Holidays Activities and Food (HAF) programme offers free holiday club places for children and young people eligible for free school meals.

The activity sessions are run during school holidays at no cost to parents, and include:

- Sports, music, arts and crafts

- Outdoor and indoor play, gaming and other exciting opportunities to learn and develop skills

- A nutritious meal each day

- Nutritional resources to keep

- Fun workshops and visits at selected venues

To find out if a child is eligible, please contact their school or [WBC's HAF Coordinator](#).

Free Bus Schemes

A double decker bus at full capacity can take over 2km of cars off the road, and the free bus travel has helped promote local businesses and encourage more sustainable transport. By helping more people to access buses and encourage people out of their cars, the amount of congestion on our roads has reduces and the air quality improves.

These happen regularly now, particularly around holidays when more people are looking to get out and about, as well as on days such as World Car Free Day, where a wider campaign is involved.

Streatley Footpath 21 officially open

After 20 years of anticipation, WBC are delighted to share that Streatley Footpath 21 is now open for everyone to enjoy!

Originally established in 2004 as part of planning permission for The Swan Hotel, the footpath remained unusable for many years due to challenging terrain, including drainage ditches, dense vegetation, and persistently wet ground.

Over the past five years, Countryside and Public Rights of Way Teams have led a series of improvements guided by ecological recommendations. These included safety tree work supported by bat surveys, vegetation clearance, water level studies, and the installation of two bridges.

A big thank you to all those involved in making this happen including: Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum, Mend the Gap, The Swan Hotel, the Berkshire Ornithological Club, the Mobility Issues Group for Goring and Streatley (MIGGS), and neighbouring landowners.

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