



## Council Report for September 2025

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

Councillor Clive Hooker, Downlands Ward

### West Berkshire Council

#### Council

Council met on 11 September to discuss:

- Delegate power to enable the continued functioning of Hermitage Parish Council.

Papers and a recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

The next meeting is on 16 October.

#### Executive

Executive met on 25 September to discuss:

- Adult Social Care Annual Report 2024/25
- Section 20 Payment Policy
- Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development
- 2025/26 Performance Report Q1
- Contract for Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive
- Capital Financing Report Financial Year 2025/26 Quarter One
- 2025/26 Revenue Financial Performance: Q1

Papers and a recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

The next meeting is on 6 November.

#### Local Government Reorganisation

##### *Ridgeway or Reading*

There's still time to find out more about plans for a new Ridgeway Council and WBC's views on Reading Borough Council's proposal to extend its borders into the east of our district.

Holybrook Parish Council are hosting a public session to be held at the Beansheaf Community Centre on Monday 13 October. Doors open at 6pm with Reading Borough Council providing a presentation and taking questions at 6.30pm, and West Berkshire Council providing a presentation and taking questions from 7.30pm.

The Greater Reading proposal is a reaction to the proposed new unitary council 'Ridgeway Council' covering the districts of West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. The proposal is a response to an announcement by the Government which will see two-tier authorities, as seen in Oxfordshire, end. Further, all new and existing unitary authorities, such as West Berkshire, will need to serve around 500,000 residents.

The new Ridgeway Council will enhance the unique character of our market towns and rural areas. West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire, and the Vale of White Horse share deep historical, economic, and geographic connections. The new councils will support innovative businesses and foster economic growth across the region.

If West Berkshire becomes part of a new Ridgeway Council, Reading wants to expand its boundaries to include Calcot, Tilehurst, Theale, Pangbourne, and Purley-on-Thames. Reading Borough Council describes these areas as "*the urban areas close to Reading's boundary*" and claims these areas rely on Reading for services. However, WBC consider that these areas are best served by West Berkshire Council and many residents agree. Reading Borough Council currently has a survey open to gather views on the proposal.

Residents can find out more about Ridgeway Council [online](#) and complete the Reading Council [here](#).

## Environment

### *Recycling Food Waste*

Food and garden waste came full circle this summer with a new pilot scheme run in partnership with Veolia, WBC's waste contractor.

Throughout August, deliveries of free soil conditioner were made to support local growing projects, community green spaces and initiatives that boost wildlife and biodiversity to six allotments, one school, two charities and four parish councils across the district.



### *Soil Conditioner Giveaway*

There is another free soil conditioner giveaway event on Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 October between 10am and 4pm at the Padworth Integrated Waste Management Facility at Padworth Lane, RG7 4JF.

No appointment necessary, just show up! Residents must bring proof of address such as an ID card or recent utility bill to prove they are a West Berkshire resident. The soil conditioner will be provided loose and WBC will not be providing bags/boxes.

The team will be restocking throughout the day, so there's no rush to arrive early. To reduce queuing times, residents are asked to take a reasonable amount to make sure everyone gets a chance to enjoy this fantastic offer.

## Leisure

### *New Parkrun in Victoria Park, Newbury*

Last month, Parkrun launched a new weekly 5k at Victoria Park, Newbury. With start-up costs and equipment supported by the council, the event has expanded access to free, inclusive activity right in the heart of town.

Why is parkrun a great fit for Newbury?

- It gets people moving in a fun, inclusive way
- It welcomes all generations, from children to older adults, with no age limit
- Walkers are just as welcome as runners, with dedicated 'parkwalker' volunteers offering encouragement
- Around 20 volunteers help each week, enjoying the benefits of being outdoors, active, and connected
- Once you join the parkrun community, you're likely to stick with it – many participants go on to complete hundreds of events

Walk, jog, run, volunteer, or simply cheer from the sidelines, Newbury parkrun will be there for all.

## Community

### *Thatcham Community Hub*

Exciting plans for a brand-new Community Hub in Thatcham are moving forward! Work is now underway to explore what the hub could look like and how it will support the town's growing population.

The project is being led by Thatcham Town Council, with support from West Berkshire Council, and was first requested by residents through the 2023 Thatcham Town Centre Strategy. The vision is to transform the Brownsfield Road and Memorial Fields area into a vibrant space for everyone.

The hub could include:

- Sports, play, and wellbeing facilities
- Cultural and creative spaces for arts and events
- Flexible workspaces for collaboration and remote working
- Inclusive housing and sustainable development
- Food, drink, and leisure amenities
- Better connections to the town centre



A preferred option will be agreed by March 2026, with the next stage focused on securing funding to make it a reality.

## Health and Social Care

### *U Turn on Resource Centres*

The Liberal Democrats have announced that they are turning back 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.

### *Annual Report*

WBC have published the Annual Report for Adult Social Care 2024/25, showcasing a year of resilience, innovation, and continued commitment to supporting the district's most vulnerable residents.

Despite a sharp rise in demand, including an increase in safeguarding referrals, the Adult Social Care team has delivered impressive outcomes across a range of services.

Feedback from residents has been overwhelmingly positive. The in-house reablement service received exceptional praise, with 98% of respondents saying they would recommend the service to others. Additionally, 99% felt respected and treated with dignity, and 90% reported feeling more independent following support.

The report has helped identify key priorities for the coming year, which will shape the development of a refreshed Adult Social Care Strategy.

- 2,455 individuals received long-term care and support, a 1.4% increase from the previous year. As of 31 March 2025
- 1,388 people were supported in the community, including 166 receiving direct payments
- 297 people were in residential care - 198 people were in nursing care
- Hospital Discharge - Adult Social care teams supported 1,332 referrals from hospitals, a 6% increase year-on-year, helping ensure timely and safe discharges
- Mental Health Services- 178 Mental Health Act assessments were completed by Approved Mental Health Practitioners

- Financial Assessments - 2,775 financial assessments and reviews were conducted, ensuring transparency and support for residents navigating care costs
- Learning Disability Support - 81% of adults aged 18-64 with a learning disability are in settled accommodation, promoting independence and stability
- Resident Satisfaction - 67% of survey respondents were extremely or very satisfied with the support received
- 93% said services improved their quality of life
- 75% felt they had control over their daily life
- 92% felt safer thanks to the services provided

### ***Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2025–2028***



The newly published Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2025–2028 confirms that people in West Berkshire have good access to pharmacy services.

Residents report high satisfaction with the pharmacy staff and services, particularly for addressing minor health concerns and providing advice. Most people live close to a pharmacy, and opening hours are generally convenient.

Pharmacies are increasingly viewed as trusted health hubs in the community, and the report highlights the need to ensure that pharmacy services keep pace with demand.

### ***Book Vaccinations Now***

Flu, COVID-19, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccines are now being offered to help protect residents and reduce pressure on local health services this winter.

Flu vaccines are available for people aged 65 and over, children aged two to 16, pregnant women, those with long-term health conditions, carers, and care home residents. COVID-19 boosters start from 1 October and are offered to people aged 75 and over, pregnant women, those with weakened immune systems, and front line health and care workers. RSV vaccines are available for people aged 75 to 79, pregnant women from 28 weeks, and those vulnerable to chest infections.

Vaccinations are available at GP surgeries, pharmacies, schools, maternity services, and community clinics.

## **Education**

### ***Learner Achievement Awards***

WBC have announced the return of the Learner Achievement Awards, taking place on Friday 7 November at Shaw House.

Awards will recognise someone whose journey reflects courage, growth, or determination, and honour their achievements and celebrate their impact. Whether they've returned to learning after a break, changed careers, or pursued a passion, WBC want to hear their stories.

This year's ceremony will feature a keynote from Anthony Bennett, known as the Miracle Man. After surviving three life-threatening infections, Anthony has become a leading motivational speaker.

Nominations can be made by 5pm on Friday 24 October [here](#).

### ***Learner Driver Courses***

Schools are now invited to sign up for GoDrive, West Berkshire's free Young Driver Intervention Programme.

Designed specifically for those aged 16 and over, GoDrive is designed to give young people the tools and confidence to become safer drivers and more responsible passengers, especially when travelling with peers.

Secondary schools, or apprenticeship co-ordinators can sign up with [GoDrive@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:GoDrive@westberks.gov.uk) to register

