

Council Report for October 2026

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

Councillor Clive Hooker, Downlands Ward

West Berkshire Council

Council

Council met on 15 October to discuss:

- **Planning Committee and National Scheme of Delegation**
- **Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027**

Papers and a recording of the meeting can be found here.

The next meeting is on 25 February for the Budget Meeting.

Executive

There was no meeting of the Executive this month.

The next meeting is on 12 November.

Ridgeway

Ridgeway back on (but delayed)

West Berkshire Council has welcomed confirmation from the Government that it's minded to proceed with local government reorganisation (LGR) across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

The proposal - including the creation of a new Ridgeway Council for West Berkshire, and most of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse – was paused last month while the Government reviewed its wider programme of local government reorganisation. The outcome of that review, published today, explains the government has taken a fresh decision to introduce the three new unitary councils for the area.

The Minister has indicated that a short period will be allowed to enable councils to make any representations on this new decision before a firm decision is made by the end of the year.

Under the plans, the seven existing county, unitary and district councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire will be replaced by three new unitary authorities, including:

- **Ridgeway Council** covering West Berkshire, and most of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts
- **Northern Oxfordshire Council** covering Cherwell and West Oxfordshire
- **Greater Oxford Council** covering Oxford and its immediate surroundings

West Berkshire Council has consistently supported the creation of a Ridgeway Council and has worked closely with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils throughout the reorganisation process.

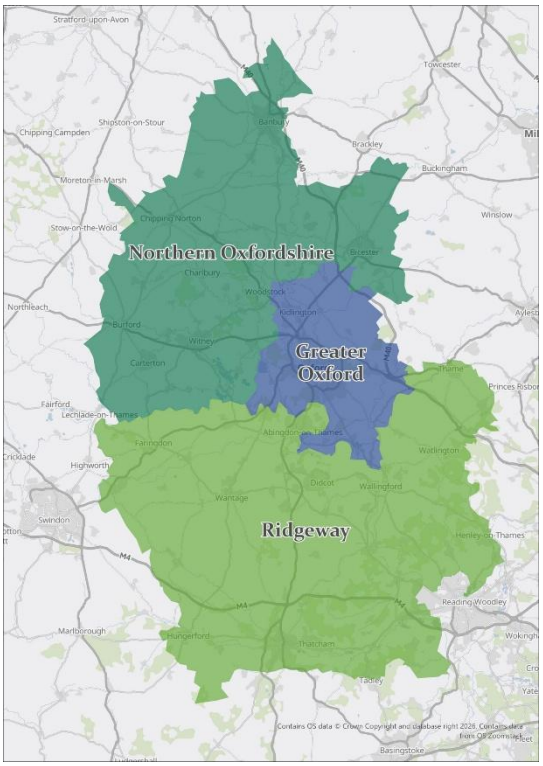
Elections for the new unitary councils will take place in May 2028, after which shadow authorities will be created to plan the new councils, but will not deliver services.

On 1 April 2029, the seven existing councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire will end and the three new unitary councils will be created. Serving councillors' terms of office will continue until the existing councils come to an end on vesting day.

The councils involved will continue working together on detailed transition planning ahead of the establishment of the new authorities. Residents will continue to receive services from their existing councils throughout the transition period and further updates will be provided as plans progress.

The district council elections in South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire and West Berkshire will go ahead in May 2027 on the existing council boundaries.

More information is available online at: 3councils.org



There will be a Mayor too

Plans for a new mayoral authority covering Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Swindon have moved a step closer after the Government confirmed the Thames Valley will join its programme for devolution. The announcement includes proposed funding to support the development of the new authority.

The proposed authority would bring additional funding, powers and local decision-making on issues such as transport, skills, employment, investment and affordable housing. Councils across the region will now work together to develop detailed proposals ahead of a public consultation in the new year.

Subject to approval of the proposal for consultation by councils across the region in December and consideration of the consultation response, the formal proposal would then be submitted to government in spring next year. If approved, a shadow authority could be established in 2027, with the first mayoral election taking place in 2028.

Local councils would continue to deliver day-to-day services, including waste collection, social care, housing, schools and local planning. Councillor Jeff Brooks, Leader of West Berkshire Council, welcomed the announcement as an important step towards securing greater investment and opportunities for communities across the region.

Communities

High Court injunction granted to protect land at Southway Plantation

WBC have secured a two-year High Court injunction to prevent further unauthorised development at Southway Plantation in Maidenhatch, near Pangbourne.

The injunction follows unauthorised development and breaches of planning control at the site. It prevents additional caravans, mobile homes, buildings and other structures from being brought onto or installed on the land. It also restricts further work on roads, paths and utilities, as well as the importation of additional waste, hardcore or similar materials.

The land must not be used for residential occupation or any other purpose that breaches planning control, except for the caravans identified in the Court Order.

The injunction, granted on 19 October 2026, will remain in place until 19 October 2028, unless the Court decides otherwise. Anyone who breaches the Order, or knowingly helps someone else to breach it, could face imprisonment, a fine or the seizure of assets.

Public Protection

Don't let your rubbish become someone else's fly-tip

A West Berkshire resident has been prosecuted after waste they handed to someone advertising on Facebook was later found fly-tipped in Burghfield Common.

Importantly, the resident was not prosecuted for fly-tipping. They were prosecuted for failing to meet their Household Waste Duty of Care.



The resident had arranged for someone to remove their waste but did not check that they held a Waste Carrier's Licence, ask where the rubbish would be taken or get a receipt.

Following an investigation by our Waste Enforcement Team, the resident was issued with a £600 Fixed Penalty Notice. When this wasn't paid, the case went to Reading Magistrates' Court, where they were convicted in their absence. The total financial penalty was £1,174.

Here are some tips to help prevent fly-tipping.

If paying someone to take away household waste, remember to S.C.R.A.P. it:

- **S**uspect all waste carriers.
- **C**heck they have a valid Waste Carrier's Licence.
- **R**efuse unexpected offers to take your rubbish.
- **A**sk what will happen to your waste.
- And make sure you get the **P**aperwork, including a proper receipt.

Taking these simple steps can protect residents from a fine and help stop your rubbish ending up dumped illegally.

WBC officers investigate fly-tipping and related waste offences using the evidence available and, where there is sufficient evidence to identify those responsible for dumping waste, will take appropriate action.

Cleaner air across West Berkshire



There's good news for the air we breathe. The latest Annual Status Report, submitted by the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) on behalf of West Berkshire Council and independently reviewed and accepted by DEFRA, shows that air quality continues to improve across West Berkshire.

All monitored locations remain comfortably within national targets for nitrogen dioxide (NO_2). In 2025, the highest level recorded anywhere in the district was 23.3 µg/m³, well below the national annual objective of 40 µg/m³.It continues a positive trend seen since 2019 and follows the removal of Newbury and Thatcham's former Air Quality Management Areas in 2024.

From more electric vehicle charging points and School Streets to sustainable transport, Bikeability and anti-idling campaigns, work continues to support cleaner, healthier ways to travel. DEFRA also praised the Council's wider approach to maintaining and improving air quality.

WBC will keep monitoring air quality across the district, while work is underway on a new Air Quality Strategy to build on the progress made so far.

Take the fright out of fireworks for pets

Bonfire Night is nearly here, and while pets might enjoy the sparkle, pets aren't always quite so keen on the noise. A little preparation can help keep them calm and comfortable, whether that's an earlier walk, closing the curtains or creating a cosy spot where they can retreat from the noise. Here are some tips to share with residents:



Make sure your dog is well exercised and has had a toilet break well before the fireworks begin.

You may need to change up your routine to accommodate this. Walk your dog before dusk, or if your dog is used to multiple walks, consider taking a longer walk in the morning and replace their evening walk with some fun enrichment, playing games or practicing some reward-based training. This will help keep them entertained/distracted but is also stimulating enough that they will benefit just as much as a walk.

Feed your pet before the fireworks begin.

An anxious pet may become unsettled and not want to eat (even after the scary noises have stopped) Always ensure that they have access to their water bowl and that it's topped up. Anxious dogs may pant more, causing them to become thirstier than usual.

Make sure your house and garden are secure.

During the fireworks, fear may make your pet try to escape. Ensure all external doors and windows are kept closed. Check your garden, even the smallest of gaps in fences that your pet wouldn't usually pay attention could be quick exits when they are frightened.

Ensure your microchip details are up to date and that your dog is wearing an ID tag.

Not only is this a legal requirement but if your pet goes missing, it will greatly improve how quickly you are reunited with them. We would recommend it best to leave their collar on all evening, just in case they were to escape.

Create a safe, comfortable space indoors.

Traditional advice describes making a den for your pet to hide. However, simply putting a frightened animal into a crate or unfamiliar den will not magically make them feel safe. For some this may even add to their distress. Instead, look for what your pet naturally finds comforting. Let them choose where they feel safest.

Drawing the curtains and turning on the TV or radio can help to mask the firework sound and block out possible flashing light.

Check your local events pages / talk to neighbours.

This will enable you to prepare for when there may be bigger displays nearby, giving you an idea of when they will start and how long for. Neighbours and other residents in your street should let you know if they are planning on setting off any at home.

Don't tell your pet off for unusual behaviours.

If your dog makes a mess or does something you don't want because of their fear, avoid telling them off. This might make them feel more scared. Your dog will pick up on how you're feeling, so do your best to relax.

If your pet struggles with fireworks every year, speak to your vet in advance about products or advice that may help.

Keeping Pets Safe This Firework Season

For many people, fireworks are an enjoyable part of seasonal celebrations, but they can be a stressful experience for pets. By planning ahead, maintaining a calm and secure environment, and understanding your pet's individual needs, you can help reduce anxiety and keep them safe throughout the firework season. If you know your pet is particularly sensitive to loud noises, don't wait until fireworks begin before taking action. Seeking advice early and making simple preparations can make a significant difference to their comfort and wellbeing.

The Public Protection Partnership would also encourage residents to be considerate of neighbours, pets and livestock when using fireworks, and wherever possible to provide advance notice of any planned displays. A little preparation and consideration can help ensure that everyone, including our four-legged companions, enjoys a safer and more comfortable firework season.

Health and Social Care

Hidden Carers



Residents who regularly look after a family member, friend or neighbour, may be a carer - and they might not think of themselves as one either.

Find out what help is available at the Carers Rights Day Information Event at Thatcham Rugby Club, Henwick Lane, RG18 3BN, on Friday 20 November, 2pm to 5pm.

Meet organisations offering advice, information and support, hear guest presentations and enjoy refreshments. There's free parking and no need to book, just come along.

Can't make it? The West Berkshire Directory brings together services, activities and support available locally. Take a look for yourself, or share it with someone you know who may be caring for someone and not realise support is available.

For event details, contact stephen.hammond@ageukberkshire.org.uk or call 0118 959 4242.

Economy

Looking for work? Connect to Work could help

Connect to Work offers free, personalised support to eligible West Berkshire residents aged 18 and over.

Residents can have a dedicated Employment Specialist who'll take the time to understand what matters and help with the things they need most. That could include finding suitable vacancies, building confidence, polishing CVs and applications, preparing for interviews or talking through adjustments that could help stay in the current job.

The programme supports disabled people, those with long-term health conditions and people facing a range of other barriers to employment.

Current Consultations

- Review of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in Newbury Town Centre (September 2026) – Closes 9 November 2026

- Proposed Traffic Regulation Order to introduce a 30mph speed limit in Sanham Green and Hornhill, Hungerford (Ref: SLR25/01) – Closes 13 November 2026

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