

# Wokingham Borough **NEWS**

Your magazine from Wokingham Borough Council

**Spring 2021**

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Wokingham Borough  
Connect newsletters



In this issue...



**Mental health  
support**  
pages 8 and 16



**Investing in our parks  
and leisure centres**  
page 18



**Waste and  
recycling services**  
page 19

# Teaming up to tackle Covid-19 together

pages 5 - 9



## ‘Excellent’ School

‘Pupils’ social development and collaboration skills are excellent.’

‘Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the lives of others.’

ISI Inspection, November 2019.

Register online: [rbc.org.uk](http://rbc.org.uk)

An independent Day School for  
Boys 11-18 and Girls 16-18

### Opportunity

### Nurture

### Growth



### Virtual Open Mornings

Friday 19th March

Friday 30th April

[registrar@yateleymanor.com](mailto:registrar@yateleymanor.com)



Yateley Manor

01252 405500

### Come and visit our family school

[www.yateleymanor.com](http://www.yateleymanor.com)

## Keeping in touch with us



[www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk)



[customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk)



(0118) 974 6000



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[/WokinghamBC](https://www.youtube.com/WokinghamBC)



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### You can access Wokingham Borough Council services in a number of ways:

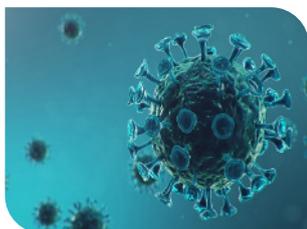
**Online:** You can search for information, book, report and pay for services on our website [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk)

**Web chat:** Our web chat is available between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and you can access it from our website [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk)

**Email:** [customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@wokingham.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** Call us on (0118) 974 6000, and select the relevant option for your enquiry

## Also in this issue...



### 5-9

Response to  
Covid-19

### 12-13

Budget  
breakdown



### 14

Latest on  
Wokingham  
Town Centre  
regeneration

# Welcome

During the past 12 months our community and those fortunate enough to serve it as I and my colleagues do, have been tested as almost never before.



The Covid-19 pandemic has touched every aspect of our lives – some with personal suffering and loss, others with financial hardship and all with curtailed freedoms and significant disruption to daily lives.

I am proud of the way we are coming through this test. Some of the ways we, as the local authority, as well as our partners and residents have responded are set out in this magazine – along with a few reminders about the basic good practices we still need to remember.

It is important that we look back and remember those lost to this terrible virus and also at those who have served their communities so selflessly throughout the pandemic. That it is why our Mayor, Malcolm Richards, has launched his Covid-19 Roll of Honour, to provide a way of thanking everyone who has helped others at this time.

But, I also want to look forward. We have built up a strong financial position through sound stewardship and good investments over many years. This has meant that, unlike other local authorities, we are not only able to support the community through Covid-19 but are also able to invest in the Borough's future.

We have set an aspirational budget – with investment in schools and children's services as well as

leisure facilities and services for adults (with a particular focus on issues such as poverty, inequality, domestic violence and mental health problems).

Other issues that we know are important to residents include congestion, climate emergency and recycling services. In each of these we are investing in new and, at times, innovative ways to improve residents' lives as well as the environment we share.

We strive to produce the optimal service for the minimum cost and seek to obtain our residents acclaim and affection for so doing, whilst diversity, equality, compassion, and fairness are at the heart of everything we do.

I hope you find this magazine interesting and please keep up to date with our latest news, videos and photos at: [news.wokingham.gov.uk](http://news.wokingham.gov.uk). Or catch us on our social media channels; their addresses are at the top left hand side of this page.

If you have any questions or comments, please do email me at: [john.halsall@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:john.halsall@wokingham.gov.uk) or call (07939) 041227 or sign up to our newsletters.

John Halsall  
**Leader of the Council**

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# Fighting Fly-tipping

Fly-tipping is a crime. When it comes to fly-tipping, we operate a zero-tolerance approach and we will actively pursue any perpetrators. We are committed to keeping the Borough clean and green and hope you can support our mission to clamp down on criminals.

Every fly-tip costs about £100 to clear up and dispose of, which is money that we would like to be spending on more positive services for our residents. We routinely inspect fly-tips and issue fines every time we find any evidence of who is responsible for the waste. So far during 2020/21 we've issued 47 fines.

## We Are Watching!

If you spot any items left in the street or down country lanes, including black bags of rubbish, report it easily and quickly online. Visit:

[www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'Fly-tipping')

## Your waste, your responsibility

There is no excuse for your waste being dumped illegally. Help us to keep the Borough clean and tidy by disposing of your waste responsibly

1. Book a slot at your nearest re3 tip.  
Visit: <https://re3.fcenvironment.co.uk/> (search click & tip)
2. Use our large unwanted items collection service. We collect up to five items for £56
3. Ensure any waste removal services you choose hold a proper license



# Elections on 6 May

The local government, parish council, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner elections are taking place on Thursday 6 May.

Borough Council elections are scheduled in: Bulmershe & Whitegates, Charvil, Emmbrook, Evendons, Finchampstead North, Finchampstead South, Hawkedon, Hillside, Hurst, Loddon, Maiden Erlegh, Norreys, Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe, Shinfield South, Twyford, Wescott, Winnersh and Wokingham Without.

There will be parish council elections in Hurst, Finchampstead, Charvil and Ruscombe and town council by-elections in wards of Woodley and Wokingham.

We are working hard to ensure polling stations are safe for residents to cast their vote. Stringent Covid-19 safety guidelines will be in place and voters are asked to:

- wear a face covering at all times
- sanitise hands using the hand sanitiser provided
- maintain and follow the social distancing instructions
- bring their own pen to mark their ballot paper

Postal voting is the easiest way to vote if you are away, or unable to get to your polling station on Election Day.

## Dates for your diary

- Deadline to register to vote – Monday 19 April
- Deadline for new postal vote applications and for changes to existing postal or proxy votes – 5pm on Tuesday 20 April
- Deadline for new applications to vote by proxy – 5pm on Tuesday 27 April



### More information

For full details on how to register and to vote by post visit: [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'elections and voting')

# PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

Planning enforcement is one of our key tools to protect towns, villages, countryside and open spaces from unauthorised building works. This year we put more resources in to 'fight the battle' and it's paying off.

Each year around 700 suspected planning breaches are reported to us and investigated by a team of officers.

If you think there has been a planning breach, report it via our website.

Go to [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search for 'planning enforcement'.

## Executive View

**Cllr Wayne Smith, executive member for planning and enforcement**

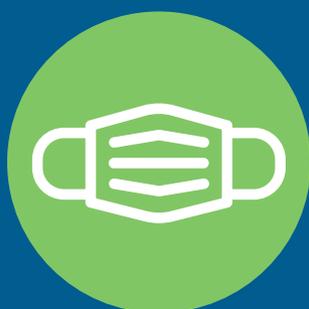
"Most reports we get turn out to be building work that is acceptable. But when we get reports that are breaches, we take action and get it removed."



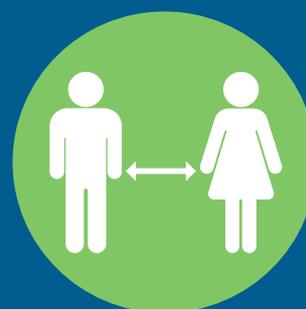
# COVID-19: DON'T FORGET THE BASICS



## HANDS



## FACE



## SPACE

As the vaccine roll-out continues, it is still vital that we all carry on following the rules in place and keep to the basic ways of staying as safe as possible.

Regulations and rules have changed as the pandemic has developed, but good hygiene practices have remained constant:

### If you have any of the main symptoms of Covid-19 (see fact box) you must:

1. Get a test to check if you have coronavirus as soon as possible.
2. You and anyone you live with should stay at home and not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test.

### If you have a positive test:

You and anyone you live with must self-isolate immediately and keep self-isolating until you're no longer infectious.

The self-isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day you had the test, if you do not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days.

You may be contacted by the NHS or the Borough Council and be asked for information to help the NHS alert your close contacts.

### The Basics:

#### DO:

- ✓ Try to stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from anyone you do not live with (or anyone not in your support bubble)
- ✓ Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- ✓ Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- ✓ Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- ✓ Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- ✓ Let fresh air into your home by opening windows, doors and air vents as much as possible
- ✓ Wear a mask wherever required

#### DON'T:

- ✗ Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

### FACT BOX

#### The key symptoms:

**A high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)

**A new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

**A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

## Lateral Flow Testing

Part of our commitment to tackling Covid-19 has been to set up rapid testing centres for keyworkers who have had to regularly leave their homes for work.

### What to do if you test positive:

Our number one priority is to keep residents as safe and well as possible and bring down our case rates. Therefore, if your test is positive, it is imperative that you and your contacts isolate at home (for 10 days from the date of the test), away from friends and family, and don't leave your home unless for essential reasons, such as medical care or to escape harm.

For support on emergency food deliveries or other emergency support such as paying heating bills, call the One Front Door on **0300 330 1189**, or visit the Citizens Advice website: [www.citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/coronavirus).

If you need to self-isolate, you might be entitled to a payment of £500 if you are unable to work from home, will lose income, or will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work. Find out more by visiting: [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and searching 'test and trace support'.

### Can I get a Lateral Flow Test if I have Covid-19 symptoms?

No. Lateral Flow Tests should only be used to test people without symptoms. If you have Covid-19 symptoms, you must not visit a Lateral Flow Test site, and you should book a test via the government's website at: [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test).

The three centres (at the time of going to print: Shute End office in Wokingham, the Microsoft Campus at Thames Valley Park and at Sindlesham Court) provide what is called Lateral Flow Tests that give a result in about 30 minutes.

These have been offered to essential workers who could not do their jobs at home; but the scheme may be expanded depending on the development of the pandemic.

The tests are vital because about one in three people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and will be spreading it without realising. By widening community testing to those showing no symptoms (called 'asymptomatic'), we are helping to find people who are infected and infectious but unaware.

To check the latest testing available, eligibility and to book a test, please visit the Council's website at: [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search for 'covid tests'.

Those getting rapid tests should get tested twice a week and it is best to book these as far in advance as possible.



## Test and Trace:

If you're told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app:

- Self-isolate immediately
- Do not leave your home for any reason – if you need food or medicine, order it online or by phone, or ask friends and family to drop it off at your home
- Do not have visitors in your home, including friends and family – except for essential care
- Try to avoid contact with anyone you live with as much as possible
- Any people you live with and any people in your support bubble do not need to self-isolate if you do not have symptoms

Your self-isolation period includes the day you were last in contact with the person who tested positive and the next 10 full days.



## Here for you

### DO YOU KNOW A COVID-19 HERO?

Wokingham Borough Mayor Cllr Malcolm Richards has launched a Roll of Honour to recognise those people and groups who have helped our community during the pandemic – and we need your nominations.

The Roll of Honour is a chance to make sure those people who have gone the extra mile to help others in the Borough are recognised. Anybody

can nominate as many people or organisations as they like and all those nominated will receive a personal letter of thanks from the Mayor and have their name added to the roll.

We are looking for nominations of all types – whether you know somebody who has volunteered for a charity, helped a friend or neighbour, or has just been a positive force in the community; we want to hear about them.

Nomination forms and the Roll of Honour itself are on the Council's website. Visit our Covid-19 pages for full details.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Wokingham Borough Community Response (WBCR) was launched at the start of the pandemic and continues to support you if you need extra help at this time.

One Front Door, led by Citizens Advice Wokingham, is the fastest way to get the help you need as it works closely with us and a range of local voluntary organisations such as the Wokingham Volunteer Centre, First Days, Involve, LINK Visiting Scheme, Age UK Berkshire and Involved Community Services - to name a few.

For contact details – see page 9.



### SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

We know many businesses have been hit hard during the pandemic and we are continuing to offer help with grants and support.

Since the start of the pandemic, the council has paid support more than 1,700 support grants to businesses, totalling more than £6.5million under the range of schemes available, including through our discretionary and mandatory schemes. Close to £19 million has also been awarded in business rates relief.

But we believe there may still be businesses that we could help; and we are urging any who may be struggling and eligible for support to contact the Council.

For full details of the help available visit the Council's website at: [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search 'business grants'

### Executive View

**Stuart Munro, executive member for business and economic development**



"One of the many ways in which Covid-19 has hit communities is by the damage it has done the economy and businesses.

Our response has been to swiftly and efficiently target support to all those businesses affected. We have been flexible and generous in providing grants support and business rate relief as well as trying to encourage people to use local businesses whenever they could do so safely."

## Mental Health Support

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, it's really important that we look after our mental health. These unprecedented times are challenging, not just physically, but mentally and emotionally.

You might feel lonely, lacking in motivation, anxious or depressed. But you are not alone.

We can get through this together. If you feel like you are struggling and you need some extra help, please talk to someone. Whether it's a friend, a neighbour, a colleague or a charity that's gives free help and advice, it's so important to share how you feel.

As the Borough's community continues to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic, mental health support for all our residents remains a priority.

We've put together a variety of useful support packs, guides and activities on our website to help you – visit [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) and search 'coping during coronavirus'

In addition, last year the Council launched its Recovery College, a new mental health service which offers access to workshops and training sessions, designed to help with mental health issues on the road to recovery.

The Recovery College provides a range of online educational courses and resources, which enable residents to gain a greater ability to manage their own lives and form stronger social relationships.

Unlike traditional services which have processes and restrictions on who can access their support, the Recovery College is open to anyone over 18 living in the Borough wishing to improve their wellbeing. Individuals can register themselves without needing any referrals.

The Recovery College provision is flexible and responds to the needs of its students. Courses include managing anxiety, managing mood, money matters and healthy sleeping habits and are shaped on users' feedback. Staff are not clinically trained, but are informed by personal experience and their own research of psycho-education.



### SUPPORT AVAILABLE

#### MIND

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

A new mental health service, commissioned by the Borough Council, provided by Oxfordshire MIND and funded by a generous donation from a Remenham family is being launched in the Borough (see page 16 for more).

Phone: **0300 123 3393**  
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)  
Website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

#### Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: **116 123** (free 24-hour helpline)  
Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

#### YoungMinds

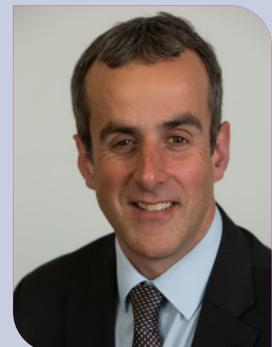
Information on child and adolescent mental health. Services for parents and professionals.

Phone: Parents' helpline  
**0808 802 5544** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)  
Website: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

For more details of organisations providing help and support visit [www.nhs.co.uk](http://www.nhs.co.uk) and search 'mental health'.

### Executive View

**Charles Margetts,**  
executive member for  
health and wellbeing  
and adult social care



"Our community's effort to get through the Covid-19 pandemic has been extraordinary – and I have been proud of the way so many of our residents and businesses have kept well to the restrictions in place. But we cannot relax our vigilance now. The vaccine programme is working, which is fantastic news, but we must all still remember the basics and keep to the rules that are in place."

# OUR RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



**19,000**

Proactive welfare checks made



More than  
**3,500**

calls made to check on vulnerable adults



**5,000**

Food deliveries made to  
**1,500**  
households



Number of WBC redeployed  
**120**



Prescriptions collected and delivered  
**917**



Number of organisations in Wokingham Borough Community Response

**10**



Delivered to more than  
**1,000**  
shielded households



Supported  
**5,000**  
residents through the One Front Door Scheme



Protected front line staff by buying  
**300,000**  
items of PPE



**£120,000**

Set aside to buy test kits as necessary when there was a national shortage

## TO GET HELP YOU CAN:

**VISIT** [www.citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/coronavirus)

**EMAIL** [contact@citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk](mailto:contact@citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk) **CALL** 0808 278 7958

We continue to work with the voluntary sector to provide the One Front Door Covid-19 response service, including Citizens advice who are proving this helpline.

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, and Saturday 9am to 1pm. You can also leave a voicemail out of hours. If you are hard of hearing, you can use the text relay service by calling 03444 111 445.

Make sure you stay up to date with the latest accurate information

 [@wokinghamboroughcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/wokinghamboroughcouncil)  [@wokinghamBC](https://twitter.com/wokinghamBC) [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk)

# More funding to tackle domestic abuse

Tackling domestic abuse is one of the Borough Council's key priorities with an increase in funding recently approved.

The Council has committed £1.5million to a five-year contract for a domestic abuse support service, with additional funding of £115,000 for 2021/22.

At present the domestic abuse service is provided by Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) and the new contract will be awarded later this summer.

Anybody can be a victim of domestic abuse regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality, or background. Abuse does not only occur between couples; it can also involve wider family members, including parental abuse by an adolescent or grown child. It can exist between older siblings, or the wider extended family in elder or honour-based abuse.

The new service will be available to all residents including a focus on increasing accessibility for BAME, male, LGBTQ+, and victims who have a disability.

The services set to be commissioned will include: a helpline, access to specialist independent domestic abuse advocates, outreach, children and young people support, group-based programmes and refuge support.

The Council has also recently employed a dedicated domestic abuse coordinator to increase coordination across the organisation.

## You said, we did: Blue Badge service improvements

Feedback from customers has helped improve the Council's Blue Badge application process.

The service realised that the old way of applying for the badges, was leaving some customers frustrated, and so listened to concerns and made improvements.

Applications can now be made without the need of an online account and can also be completed on behalf of another person, which has made a huge difference to some of the most vulnerable residents in the Borough. The online application form can be saved while working on it, and applicants can return and complete it within 14 days. They also have the ability to download the form for their records.

Another improvement will see an automatic email being sent to inform the person their badge is nearing expiry. There is also an option for applicants to pay the £10 fee with their application, via Gov.pay which will be refunded if the application is unsuccessful.

The Council can arrange a telephone appointment for those needing assistance. To book a telephone appointment, please call **(0118) 974 6000** and choose option 5, then option 3 for the Blue Badge team.

CAMHS



SEN

# GET YOUR VOICE HEARD

The independent voice of families, representing their experiences to improve lives

## What do we do?

We give a voice to families, who like ours, have a child or young person aged 0-25 years who has any Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). We work in partnership with education, health, social care and other service providers to make sure the services they commission, plan and deliver meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in the Wokingham Borough. We represent their experiences, views and priorities.

Social  
Care

Short  
Breaks

## How do we do this?

By listening to our members and as many voices as we can, from across the Wokingham Borough, from a wide range of communities including all ages from birth to 25 and inclusive of the all special educational needs and disabilities. We do this through:

Events



Training courses



Consultations and surveys



Information sharing

School  
Transport

Disability

## Join us, become a member

**Membership is FREE.** To become a member of SEND Voices Wokingham email your contact details to [info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](mailto:info@sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk) with your contact details. You can also find details of how to join on our website [www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk](http://www.sendvoiceswokingham.org.uk) or you can contact us through Facebook.



# BUDGET BREAKDOWN

## 2021/22

### WHAT YOUR MONEY IS SPENT ON

This is how we will be dividing up our £132,477,580 budget this year:

**Adult social care  
and wellbeing**



**39%**

**Children's social care  
and safeguarding**



**22%**

**Environmental services**  
(including waste and recycling and grass cutting)



**12%**

**Highways and transport**



**7%**

**Democratic process**  
(elections and members' meetings)



**8%**

**Other frontline services**  
(including libraries and community development)



**10%**

Note: Debt charges and investment income: 2%

Visit [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'medium term financial plan' for a full breakdown)

### WHAT DO WE SPEND OUR MONEY ON?

Did you know the majority of our money is spent on statutory services? We have growing costs year-on-year because of more residents and increased demand on services.

## EXECUTIVE VIEW

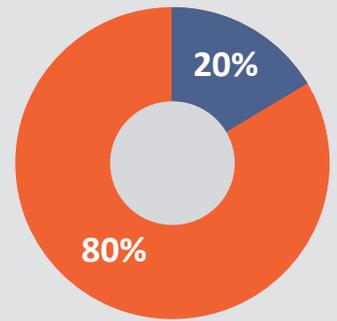
**Cllr John Kaiser, deputy leader and executive member for finance and housing**

“Sound finances underpins everything we do for our residents. Despite getting very little support from the Government compared to other authorities, our strong reserves and successful financial planning has meant we’ve been able to support the community through Covid-19 as well as plan for investment in services and facilities in the future.”



## BUDGET 2021/22 - £132 MILLION

- Non-statutory services**  
e.g. leisure, parks and open spaces, and bus subsidies
- Statutory services**  
e.g. adult social care, children’s services, waste collection and disposal, and highways



## WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM



\*Note: Each year the Council makes an allowance of non-collection of Council Tax. If the Council then exceeds its collection target, this surplus is applied the following year to support the revenue budget. This is only 0.35% of the total budget and so is not shown in this table.

## HOW MUCH COUNCIL TAX DO YOU PAY WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL?

### ON A BAND D PROPERTY:

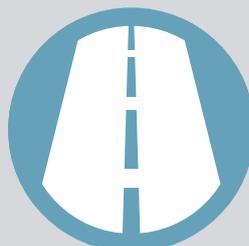


### The everyday services this pays for includes:

12.3 million refuse & recycling collections



Inspecting & maintaining 450 miles of highways & paths



Maintaining 143 miles of public rights of way



Corporate parent to 190 children & care leavers



Providing long term care to 1,584 vulnerable adults



## Major developments update

### Matthewsgreen and Arborfield schools

Wokingham Borough will soon have two more primary schools.

The new school at Arborfield Green, due to open in September 2021, will be for up to 420 pupils, and will have a nursery and a 3G sports pitch.

Modules for the school at Matthewsgreen, which will be run by the Keys Academy Trust, were lifted into place last month. This location will also include a community centre.

Both are modular construction, meaning most of the build happens off site which is good for the environment as it reduces construction waste.

### Observer Way

A major new road in Arborfield opened to traffic last November, connecting the A327 Reading Road to the A327 Eversley Road, taking traffic around the villages of Arborfield and Arborfield Cross.

The new road is part of the Council's major highways project which will see over £100million invested across the Borough.

Observer Way is not just for vehicles- there is a shared pathway for cyclists and pedestrians and a wildlife-friendly green bridge offering a safe route across the road for horse riders, ramblers, cyclists and wildlife, specifically badgers and bats. Hedgerow planting will help to 'signpost' badgers and bats safely over the road.



## Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration continues to buck the national trend

The ongoing regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre continues to buck the national trend by attracting businesses keen to invest in the area.

In the recent months, new independents Hamlet Bistro, Peacock House Interiors and the Vale Clinic, a local podiatry specialists, have become the latest regeneration tenants. These closely follow Indian kitchen Dabbawalla, which opened in Peach Place in January.

The success of the regeneration scheme was marked last December when it won the Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative award at the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Service Awards 2020.

The annual awards recognise the best in local government frontline services across the UK, with winners required to demonstrate how their projects and initiatives have improved their areas as well as how they have overcome challenges to achieve success.

Construction work is almost complete on the first two phases of the regeneration, at Elms Field and Peach Place, and is progressing well on the final phase on the site of the former Carnival Pool. This final piece of the puzzle will deliver a brand new sports and leisure centre, library, swimming pool, health and wellbeing centre and café as well as 55 new homes. The new Hub at Carnival will also be a multi-purpose building, which can be transformed into a performance space seating up to 400 people.

The regeneration is being delivered at no cost to the tax payer, with the developments self-funding through income from the sales of the residential properties and the rent from the new businesses.

## Planning for the future

The local plan will set out where and how growth will take place in the Borough, including plans for new or improved schools, roads, parks, shops, community facilities and homes.

Last year we consulted on a draft plan, which set out our proposal for development – a summary of what was said is on our website [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'local plan update').

An unexpected change to the emergency planning arrangements around AWE Burghfield last year means that the Grazeley garden town may no longer be achievable. We are exploring alternative options and will publish an updated timetable of more consultation shortly.

*Jim Usher,  
Headteacher  
of Emmbrook  
Junior School*



# GIVING SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN THE SUPPORT THEY NEED

## Council to provide free school meals during school holidays

This last year has been hard on all of us, but it has been especially difficult for families with school age children. So for children who normally get benefits-related free school meals during term time, we will be providing a range of meal support to families for the school holidays for the rest of 2021.

We are taking part in the government's Holiday Activities and Food programme which includes fun activities and healthy meals for one week of the Easter break, the summer break, and one week of the Christmas break. For the holiday weeks not covered, we will provide vouchers.

## Council support for schools during Covid

Since the start of the pandemic the Council has provided continuous support to the Borough's schools to help them navigate these uncharted waters.

### Our support includes:

- Daily briefings with information and guidance
- Weekly roundtable meetings to explore issues and share best practices
- Support for remote education, including training on the new remote teaching platforms and building system capacity for the schools
- Help with a mental health and wellbeing support programme for pupils and staff
- Support monitoring the Covid impact on staffing and pupil attendance

- Assistance with track and trace and rapid testing
- Advice from the Council's Public Health consultant

Here's what Jim Usher, headteacher at Emmbrook Junior School who took up his first headship post with us in the early days of the pandemic, had to say:

**“Joining any new school as a headteacher is stressful, especially during a global pandemic. As I come to the end of my first year here, I can confidently say I have had more support and communication from Wokingham Borough Council than I had in the two decades at my previous local authority.”**

**“My questions are responded to promptly and the weekly leadership drop-in meetings have been invaluable for information sharing and providing a network of useful and supportive fellow professionals.”**

**“The regular emails and round table discussions have been integral to successfully running a school especially during the current lockdown. While I have met very few of my headteacher colleagues in person, I have been made part of a group and given as much guidance as I need.”**

## Executive View

**Cllr UllaKarin Clark, executive member for children's services**

“No child in our Borough should go hungry and the Council will ensure that free school meals are provided during the school holidays.”



# Charity and Community Hub set to open

Later this year will see the first Charity and Community Hub open in Wokingham Town Centre. This is an ambitious project which builds on from the positive partnership developed between the Borough Council and the voluntary, charity and community sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It has been clear during this time that residents have really benefitted from the coordinated way everyone has worked together to ensure people get the help and support they need.

The Hub will bring a number of voluntary, charity and community organisations under one roof. The first hub will be based at Waterford House in Wokingham town centre, and it will provide high quality information, advice and support to enable people to access the right services to meet their individual needs and circumstances at the right time

This is the first hub of its kind in Wokingham, and there are aspirations to roll out further Hubs elsewhere in the Borough during the coming year, as identified in the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy agreed in 2020.



# Quarter of a million pound donation helps launch mental health pilot service

A pilot scheme to help people with mental health issues in the Borough has been launched thanks to a £250,000 donation from a Remenham family.

Tatiana and Andrey Borodin have generously made the donation to Berkshire Community Foundation to fund an eighteen-month pilot in the Borough to help people suffering problems such as anxiety, isolation and stress.

The scheme will be run by mental health charity Oxfordshire MIND. Among the areas it will focus on are recognising mental health issues early and intervening to prevent conditions deteriorating, ensuring timely referrals to specialists, coordinating the support available for those with mental health issues and promoting awareness of issues in the community. Oxfordshire MIND has a great track record of service – with a satisfaction rate of about 90% where it currently operates.

It will develop a way to support those with mild to moderate mental health needs, for instance including non-medical interventions such as social prescribing, self-management, peer support, signposting, and activities. It is estimated that it will support about a thousand people per year. The MIND service will be based in Wokingham town centre as well as in GP surgeries around the Borough.



# Highways – tackling congestion with investment in technology

## Working to make getting around the Borough easier

We know how frustrating sitting in traffic can be, so we've been looking at ways to reduce disruption on our roads.

## Sensitive streets review

Utility companies are responsible for more than 70% of roadworks. We've reviewed the network to see which streets are most affected by disruption. When a utility needs to do work on these roads, we make sure they are scheduled for the least disruptive times, such as overnight or non-peak hours.

We are also using the review to prioritise the roads that most need technology upgrades to keep the Borough moving. We are developing a virtual traffic management control room so we can better monitor traffic levels, using satellite GPS to monitor speeds and CCTV in strategic locations to help us see any problems. We are also making signals more responsive so we can control them to help reduce congestion as and when it occurs.

## Intelligent transport schemes

We've spent the last year investing in intelligent transport technologies that will help us respond to any issues on the network in real time and we have a couple of exciting pilot projects coming soon.

- Variable message signs – We have a project in Shinfield, near the Thames Valley Park, where we will be installing these signs to advise you of incidents on the network, suggest alternative routes and warn of upcoming closures or traffic issues ahead.
- Intelligent parking signs – You will soon be able to check for available spaces at the Carnival Pool car park when entering Wokingham town centre.
- Smarter traffic signals – We are installing dozens of intelligent traffic lights that use a combination of cameras and sensors to respond to traffic demands throughout the day to help improve journey times.

## Communication

We have several ways to tell you about roadworks that are taking place on our network.

- Facebook and Twitter: Our traffic and travel pages have upcoming planned works as well as emergency works.
- One.network: Check your journey before leaving home to see all planned roadworks.
- E-newsletter: Our e-newsletter gives you the latest information about improvements to the network, including roads, footways, cycleways and greenways. Sign up via the QR code below.

## Executive View

**Cllr Pauline Jorgensen, executive member for highways**

"We know how frustrating sitting in traffic is for everyone, so we are working on ways to make our network flow better. Car ownership in Wokingham Borough is the highest in the country – we can't change that, but we are doing all we can to make our road network as efficient as possible."



For the latest news and information from the Council straight to your inbox, sign up to our Wokingham Borough Connect newsletters

# INVESTING IN SPORT AND LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

## £2.4million Dinton Activity Centre opens soon



Set to open in late spring our state-of-the-art activity centre will be the Council's first net-zero carbon building supporting our mission to make Wokingham a net carbon neutral Borough by 2030.

Seventy-five percent of the new Dinton Activity Centre building was completed offsite using modern methods of construction by modular building specialist Reds10. Modular construction significantly reduces the carbon emissions in the construction process.

The new building features several eco-friendly functions including: windcatchers and solar panels on the roof, and air source heat pumps, which will significantly reduce the overall energy demand. The outer building's Siberian larch cladding, will not only weathers over time to blend with its natural surroundings, but is also certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The two-storey centre will also include an activity hall, coffee shop, lake side viewing terrace, meeting rooms, a 'changing spaces' facility and cycle parking.

## Carnival Pool and Fitness Centre on track



Due to open in summer 2022, the new centre will offer residents a larger leisure centre and library and is set to become the local destination of choice for residents' sport, leisure and entertainment.

The new complex will feature two swimming pools (a six-lane 25m pool and teaching pool with moveable depth floor and splash pad); a larger fitness suite and specialist group cycling studio; two large studios; a four-court sports hall; a health and wellbeing centre; larger café; and space for children's parties. There will also be a large library including space for events and activities, a lending library, fun children's zone and space for exhibitions.

Demolition of the old centre took place in 2020 and contractors Pelikaan are making excellent progress on the new complex.

Once Covid-19 restrictions ease, we also look forward to safely welcoming visitors back to our newly opened £14.5million Bulmershe Leisure Centre, in Woodley, which also offers a six-lane swimming pool, gym, four-court sports hall and café.

## Cantley Park revamp



Work to revamp facilities at Cantley Park in Wokingham is well underway following our £1.6million investment including a £616,619 grant from the Premier League, The FA, and the government's Football Foundation.

Residents will soon be able to enjoy a brand new state-of-the-art 3G artificial pitch with floodlights, with the existing pavilion refurbished to provide new changing facilities, a viewing balcony and café. An additional 39 parking spaces will also be created, bringing the total to 164. Other enhancements will include improvements to the current grass pitches.



# Waste and recycling

Many of you will now have your new waterproof recycling bags, with rollout across the Borough expected to complete by mid-April. You can start using the new bags to protect your recycling from the elements as soon as you get them.

The 60-litre bags are 10 litres bigger than the old black recycling boxes, allowing you to recycle even more. Most importantly, they keep out rain so will mean the Borough's paper and card recycling is of the required quality to be recycled.

In late 2019, paper and card reprocessing plants stopped accepting wet materials. We are replacing the black boxes with sealable waterproof recycling bags to ensure the paper and card our residents put out for recycling stays dry and meets the new standards.

We continue to work towards our goal of being a net carbon neutral Borough by 2030, which links to our target of hitting a 70 per cent recycling rate by the same year.

The Borough's recycling rate dropped by six per cent due to the wet paper problem, but we expect our recycling rate to rise in the months ahead now we've addressed this.

The new waterproof recycling bags are being delivered this year together with 100 green food waste bags and the annual allocation of 80 blue general waste bags.

## How to use them

- All recycling goes into the bags mixed
- Keep them sealed shut at all times. Close the side Velcro first before shutting the top Velcro all the way along
- Only open the bags when you're putting items inside
- Pop the bags out on your normal weekly collection day alongside your blue bags and your food waste caddy

## How do I get more bags?

- More recycling bags will be available to residents free of charge once we have completed the initial rollout by mid April.
- Go to [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'recycling bags') to get the latest updates and information on how to obtain more bags

## I think I've been missed

- You can check when your recycling bags and blue bags are due to be delivered on our website. Go to [www.wokingham.gov.uk](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk) (search 'recycling bags') for further information and how to notify us

## Executive View

### Cllr Parry Bath, executive member for environment

"The recycling bags are the best option for the Council and residents – they are a great solution to the changes in the paper/card market and they will save money for the Council and increase recycling by increasing capacity of recycling containers for residents."



# Tackling poverty

Wokingham Borough often appears on lists of the best places to live in the country. While this is true, we do still have people living in poverty among us. And the Covid-19 pandemic has made things more difficult for many of our residents.

Existing inequality relating to wages, employment, health, gender, ethnicity, education and social isolation have all been exacerbated by the crisis, with disproportionate impacts on those who already face disadvantages. We are also seeing an increase in people facing employment and financial insecurity for the first time, either due to job losses or furlough.

Earlier this year, the Council committed to better understand the causes of poverty in the Borough so we can prevent it before it happens and help people out of poverty when they are already there.

We are working closely with residents and our partners in the voluntary sector to define poverty in the Borough and create a plan to tackle the issues and bring about sustainable long-term change. Together, we will tackle poverty in Wokingham Borough.

The Building Control Solutions (BCS) team is here to help you.



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If you would like to discuss a future project, please contact us through our website

**[www.bcsolutions.org.uk/contact/](http://www.bcsolutions.org.uk/contact/)**  
where we would be happy to speak to you.

# MY JOURNEY WOKINGHAM

Many of us are struggling more than usual as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on our everyday lives and what we do to our bodies makes a big difference to how we feel. Our active travel team, My Journey, is here to help.



Small changes in our day-to-day lives can make all the difference. Taking a brisk walk at lunchtime or leaving the car at home and walking or cycling instead are great ways to help both our physical fitness and mental health and wellbeing.

Not sure how to get around the Borough on foot or on your bike? Visit [myjourneywokingham.com](http://myjourneywokingham.com) where we have a variety of maps and journey planners for various routes around the Borough.

You can also find out about cycling classes for all ages and levels to help improve your skills and confidence.

Keeping active is just one thing we can do to look after our mental

health and wellbeing every day. Even a few

minutes of regular physical activity can help to release endorphins which help you feel better and improve your sleep. Visit [myjourneywokingham.com](http://myjourneywokingham.com) to find out more.



## Action to tackle inequality across the Borough

A commitment to equality and to championing diversity is at the heart of all we do. We have been working with residents and partners to develop an action plan to tackle inequality in all its forms.

The plan will set out how we'll continue to listen to our community and use what we hear to plan and deliver services that work well for everyone and how we will champion our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

The plan will also set out how we will create a diverse and engaged workforce in which everyone is respected.

We will continue to seek public input on key issues or concerns, barriers to progress, and ideas for improvement as the action plan develops. Our work in this area will change based on what we learn, so that we can continuously improve outcomes for vulnerable people in our community.

As part of our commitment to tackling inequality we will make sure residents are kept informed of our actions and progress in this vital area.

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# Small changes can have a big impact on our Borough

We want to make Wokingham Borough a cleaner and healthier place for you and your family to live, work and visit – but we can't do it without you!

Although climate change is a global issue, it also affects our local natural environment. Every small change we make in our daily routines will have a significant impact. There are more than 170,000 of us living in Wokingham Borough, all our small actions can add up to have a big positive impact on all our lives.

## WHAT IS NET CARBON NEUTRAL?

Becoming 'Net Carbon Neutral' means reducing greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible and then compensating for any remaining carbon emissions by doing something that absorbs carbon such as planting trees or improving natural habitats. As a Borough, our goal is to be Net Carbon Neutral by 2030. To get there, we are working with local residents, community groups, businesses and charities. There are many things that you can do to help – recycling your food waste is one of them.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

More than 50% of Borough residents recycle food waste. Did you know that since we launched this service two years ago, more than 9,000 tonnes have been turned into fertiliser and energy? That is enough to power 33,000 homes for one day. If you aren't already taking part, now is the time to start. We'll provide you with the caddies and food waste bags, you just need to give us your food waste each week. Learn more by visiting our website and searching 'food waste'.



## HOW CAN YOUR SMALL CHANGE BENEFIT YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY?

If every household participates, together we could almost double the amount of food waste diverted from incineration and landfill. That's good for the environment, but also for our finances - for every tonne diverted we save £100 of your money. Sign up to our Climate Emergency e-newsletter via the QR code below to learn more about what we are doing to reach Net Carbon Neutrality, including projects like a new solar farm in Barkham, the Wokingham Community Energy scheme, retrofitting schemes and other small changes you can make in your daily life.

## Executive View

**Cllr Gregor Murray, executive member for resident services, communications and emissions**

"Recycling your food waste is easy – simply pop it in the caddy instead of your blue bag. We all need to play our part in tackling climate change. Sign up to our newsletter to learn more about what we are doing and what you can do to help. For more ideas of little changes you can make to help us reach Net Carbon Neutral sign up for our newsletter"



For the latest news and information from the Council straight to you inbox, sign up to our Wokingham Borough Connect newsletters



The Wokingham branch is always friendly, welcoming and work fast. We needed some quick advice on options resulting in new accounts being opened. This was all done in 10 minutes and our passbooks arrived in the post two days later.



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December 2020 Smart Money People review

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