

Council Strategy 2019 – 2023  
Refreshed May 2021

# Building on our strengths



Working together to make West  
Berkshire an even greater place  
in which to live, work and learn



WestBerkshire  
C O U N C I L

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# Foreword



**Nick Carter**  
Chief Executive



**Lynne Doherty**  
Leader of the Council

Welcome to our refreshed Council Strategy for 2021 – 2023. In 2019 we published a new Council Strategy covering the period 2019 – 2023, which included the Council’s contribution towards the delivery of the Vision 2036, through our core business services and six priorities for improvement.

We have reached the halfway point in delivering on the commitments we made when we first published this strategy, so now is the right time to refresh it- based on the progress we have made and changes to the context in which the Council operates- to ensure it is still relevant.

Despite international, national, regional and local efforts, the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the District. It is sobering to reflect on the 226 lives tragically lost to Covid-19 (by 4 March 2021) and on its impact on the health and wellbeing of many others. We are grateful to our residents, community groups and organisations, Councillors and our employees, for everything they have done to minimise the negative impact.

Our strong local economy, the natural environment and the resilience of our residents, are all factors that helped ensure that the impact of the pandemic in West Berkshire, was not as significant as in other parts of the country.

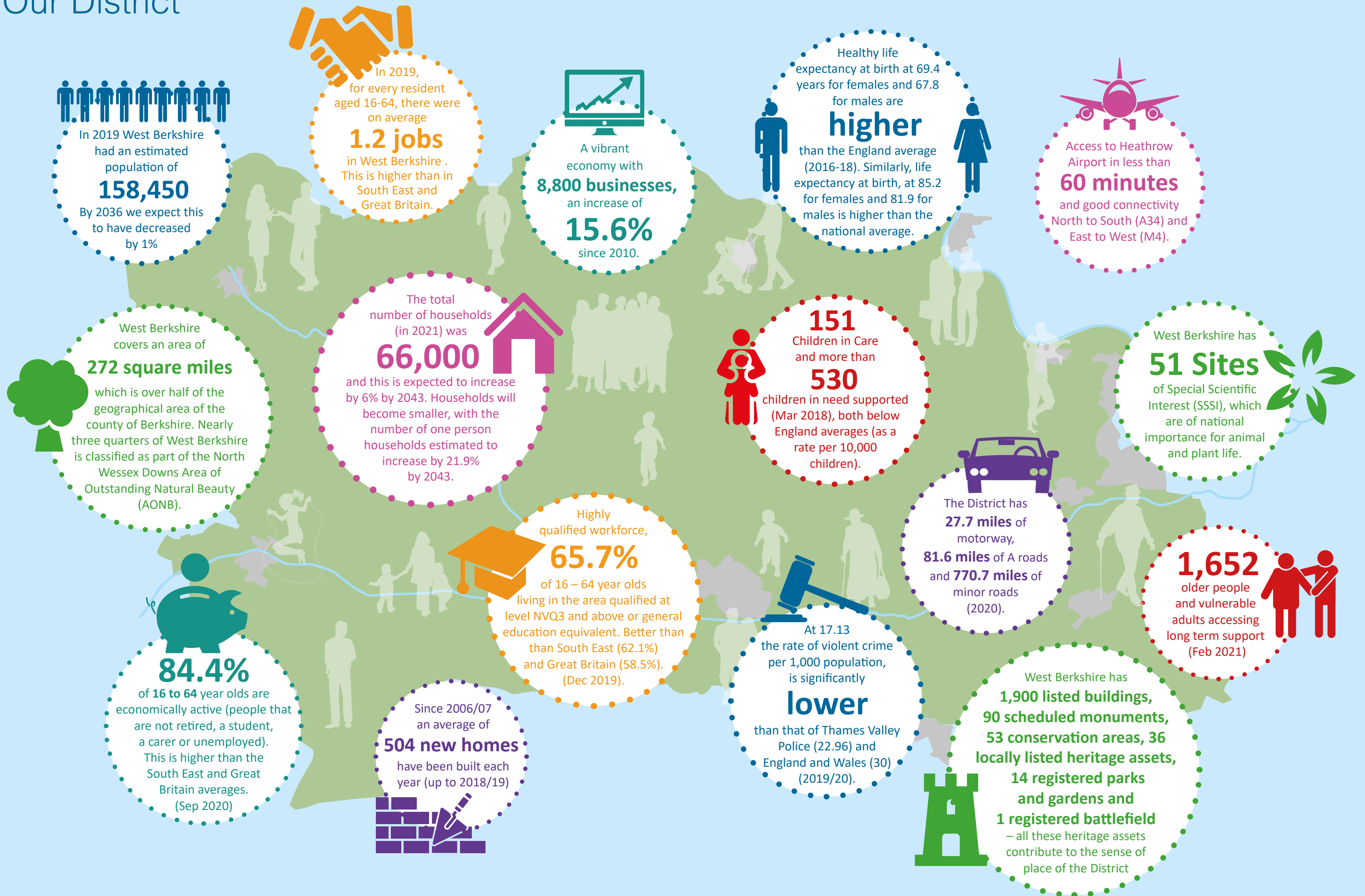
During the first two years of the Council Strategy, our focus was on maintaining the strong performance of our core services. It is credit to our workforce, partner organisations and residents that, over the last year, we all adapted new ways of working and ensured continuity of service delivery, even if not provided in the traditional ways, and maintained a high standard of service.

Good progress has been made towards delivering on the commitments we set out in the original strategy with improvements made under each priority. Examples of outcomes achieved to date include: supporting an increased number of vulnerable children, young people and adults earlier- before they reach crisis point or, when necessary, ensuring that safeguarding services achieve the outcomes they expect; building two new schools; supporting over 300 start-ups and businesses seeking to grow; investing in infrastructure to maintain traffic flow; meeting our commitment to build much needed homes and finding ways to generate renewable energy.

Successful engagement and good communication with residents contributed to these successes. Reassuringly, the majority of the respondents to our Residents Survey (June 2020) reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with how West Berkshire Council runs its services and the Council’s performance in relation to managing the local response to Covid-19.

This refreshed strategy builds on our achievements to date, considers new challenges and opportunities that have emerged during the last two years and sets out our commitments for the next two years, in order that we may continue to work together to make West Berkshire an even greater place to live, work and learn.

# Our District





# Building on our strengths – strategic framework

The key components of our Council Strategy are illustrated in the diagram below. They include the six priorities for improvement (which are interdependent and grouped into four broad themes) and the core business areas (which provide reassurance that the strongly performing services that are needed and valued by our residents continue to be delivered at high standards).

In 2019, we set out the six priorities for improvement for the four-year lifetime of the Council Strategy. These are the first steps of a longer journey to deliver the West Berkshire Vision 2036. The priorities have been defined in consultation with our residents and based on an analysis of trends describing the needs, aspirations and ambitions of people living, working or visiting West Berkshire. The six priorities are to:

- Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes
- Support everyone to reach their full potential
- Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire
- Develop local infrastructure, including housing, to support and grow the local economy
- Maintain a green district
- Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships

At the halfway point of the Council Strategy delivery we reassessed both, the changes to the social, economic and environmental context, and the progress made in delivering the priorities for improvement and concluded that they remain relevant for the last two years of the Strategy.

In terms of social, environmental and economic contextual changes, the most significant factors are the Council declaring a climate emergency in July 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Socially, more than 200 residents have tragically lost their lives and other people’s health and wellbeing has been impacted long-term. In particular, issues of isolation, mental health and emotional wellbeing, and disruption to children’s education due to the closure of schools, are areas of greatest need. Based on national research, the ‘inequality gap’ is likely to have grown. On the other hand, the ways in which individuals, community groups and organisations came together and engaged to respond to local needs, is something we treasure and intend to harness going forward. Communication and engagement, including through digital channels, have increased and improved the ways we interact with residents and local organisations.

Environmentally, declaring a climate emergency was a natural evolution of the Council’s identification of needs and our plans, including prioritising the environment in the Council Strategy and detailing further our response in the Environment Strategy and associated delivery plans. The need to reduce carbon emissions, strengthen the District’s resilience to flooding, warmer weather and droughts, and to increase awareness that everyone needs to play their part in protecting the environment, are highlighted in the Environment Strategy. During the pandemic there has been an increase in the amount of household waste produced, but traffic levels and the associated emissions have reduced. A number of active travel schemes and activities have been progressed.

Economically, West Berkshire has not been as impacted as elsewhere. The sectors that were significantly affected include hospitality, leisure, wholesale and retail, young people, women and people from minority ethnic groups are more likely to work in those industries. Employees and businesses have been supported to minimise the impact of the pandemic.

Changes in work patterns with more people working from home means that consideration needs to be given to the use of business properties, but also the role of our town centres. The economic sectors forecasted to grow in the District are less impacted by the pandemic and job density and other economic indicators remain at healthy levels.

Despite the challenging context, the Council continued the delivery of its core business. Working with residents, community groups, organisations and businesses, and finding alternative ways to deliver services in response to such challenges, meant that service continuity to a high standard has been maintained.

In addition, good progress has been made in delivering the priorities for improvement and associated commitments. The details are included in our quarterly performance management reports but key achievements are presented in the relevant sections of this strategy. The delivery of the agreed commitments included a further strengthening of our strategic framework. In producing a number of more specific plans, such as the Environment Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy, Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy, Housing Strategy and Workforce Strategy, we have conducted additional engagement with residents, communities and organisations in West Berkshire.

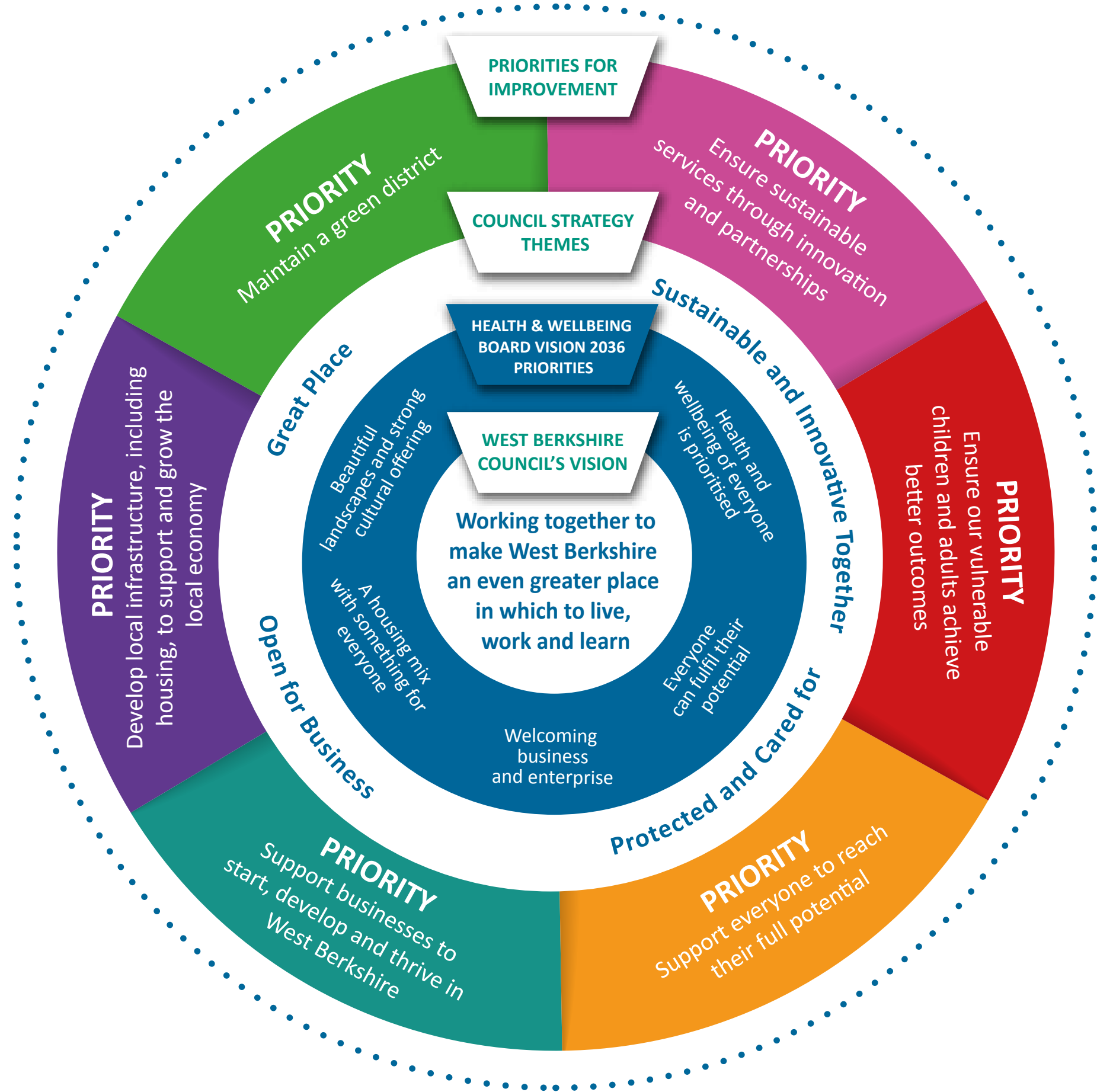
This more specific engagement and the progress made to date, together with our more detailed plans included in the Recovery and Renewal Strategy, confirmed that our priorities for improvement, set two years ago, remain highly relevant and are retained for the remaining two years of the current strategic planning cycle. Details on the commitments we are working to deliver are presented in the next sections of this strategy.

"Environmentally, declaring a climate emergency was a natural evolution of the Council’s identification of needs and our plans, including prioritising the environment in the Council Strategy and detailing further our response in the Environment Strategy and associated delivery plans."





# West Berkshire Council Strategy 2019-2023



## Core Business Areas

The Council provides over 700 mandatory, core services which it believes are essential for the communities of West Berkshire. These include:

- **Protecting our children**
- **Supporting education**
- **Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults**
- **Maintaining our roads**
- **Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean**
- **Providing benefits**
- **Collecting Council Tax and Business Rates**
- **Planning and housing**
- **Culture, leisure and libraries**
- **Economic development**

## Overarching Values

### Integrity

‘we act with integrity ensuring all decisions are lawful, transparent and impartial’

### Customer focused

‘we listen to our customers and do our best for them’

### Fairness

‘we will always treat everyone fairly’

# Core Business

Throughout the lockdown, the Council ensured continuity of the core services that are needed and valued by residents. In many areas a high standard of service delivery has been maintained.

## Protecting our children

### Achievements:

- ✓ The Council has continued to deliver a Children and Family service rated as 'Good' at the last Ofsted inspection.
- ✓ During the last two years the Council, responded to over 10,000 enquiries and managed over 3,000 referrals of children at risk of neglect and abuse. Arrangements for stronger joint working between the Council's teams and with partner organisations are ensuring cases are identified and supported.
- ✓ Statutory assessments and visits are conducted in a timely manner, using technology when it was appropriate and safe to do so.

## Supporting education

### Achievements:

- ✓ Latest available data shows that over 95% of our schools are rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.
- ✓ During 2019 and 2020, a total of 3,650 primary (reception) and 4,383 secondary (Year 7) school place offers were made.
- ✓ Over 98% of applications for primary and secondary school places received one of their top three preferences.
- ✓ West Berkshire is currently in the top 20% of local authorities in England for the high proportion of 16-17 year olds in education, employment and training.

## Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults

### Achievements:

- ✓ In the last two years Adult Social Care service has responded to over 6,000 new requests for support.
- ✓ At any point in time in during the last two years, ASC has supported, on average 1,650 vulnerable adults and older people with long term services, and managed over 1,000 adult safeguarding enquiries.
- ✓ Completed timely financial assessments for a high proportion of cases (in some quarters for 100% of cases).
- ✓ 4 out of 5 Adult Social Care services were rated 'Good' or higher, with regards to safety, by the Care Quality Commission. Improvements have been made to the fifth service but no new inspections have taken place to provide a change of rating.

## Maintaining our roads

### Achievements:

- ✓ West Berkshire is in top quartile nationally in terms of the high quality of our road network.
- ✓ Over 99% of works to permanently repair potholes and the edge of roads have been completed in a timely manner.

## Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean

### Achievements:

- ✓ During lockdown, the kerbside collection service continued to operate. Currently we provide a good level of recycling, composting and reusing, as a proportion of the waste collected. We have reduced the percentage of waste landfilled to a level that is well below the maximum threshold set.
- ✓ An overall rating of 'Good' has been maintained in terms of an acceptable level of litter, detritus and graffiti.

## Providing benefits

- ✓ Good performance continues to be achieved with timely decisions on new or changes to Housing Benefits Claims.

## Collecting Council Tax and Business Rates

- ✓ The Council has a strong record in terms of the quick and efficient collection of Council Tax and Business Rates. However, the decision was made to allow more flexibility in 2020/21 in order to support residents and businesses who were struggling financially due to the many challenges brought about by Covid-19. Arrangements are in place to mitigate the financial impact of this action.
- ✓ Our Business Rates team has put in place processes to promptly distribute government grants to support local businesses and manage a Council Tax Hardship fund.

## Planning and housing

- ✓ The determination of planning applications in a timely manner has improved considerably over the last two years, exceeding national averages.
- ✓ Significant improvements have been achieved for the timeliness of assessing Common Housing Register applications. Higher targets have been set and achieved for homelessness prevention and relief duties, resulting in secure accommodation.



## Culture, leisure and libraries

- ✓ The usually high number of visits to our eight libraries and Mobile Library reduced during 2020/21 due to lockdown restrictions. However, during last year, 39,000 customers (of whom 14,000 were under 18) accessed the library services. The Mobile Library and At Home service (taking books to the elderly and housebound) continued throughout. Libraries also launched the new 'Order & Collect' services, a successful programme of online events including story time, the online Summer Reading Challenge and local history talks.
- ✓ West Berkshire Museum has a collection of 50,000 objects spanning 500,000 years of human history in the District. The staff and volunteers opened the museum to the public between lockdowns and developed a programme of online history talks and family activities as well as a new online "virtual museum" tour <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=zR5tX1baZBx&hl=1>
- ✓ Shaw House stayed open for Registration Services (births, marriages and deaths) and were able to stage some family events in the gardens during the summer between lockdowns.

## Economic development

- ✓ Good engagement with the top local employers helped to ensure that they remain in the District.
- ✓ In addition to distributing government grants to support eligible businesses and self-employed residents, support and advice has been provided to businesses and town centre groups to enable them to reopen safely when lockdown measures are eased.

"Throughout the lockdown, the Council ensured continuity of the core services that are needed and valued by residents"





## Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes



### 1.1 The original commitments included in the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023

Support children, young people and vulnerable adults at an earlier stage, ensuring they are safe, through **prevention** and early intervention services.

Improve **outcomes** for our looked after children and other vulnerable children and adults.

Ensure **better outcomes** for social care users and improved satisfaction.

Safeguard against **new and emerging risks**.

Support more vulnerable young adults into **employment**.

### 1.2 How we have done 2019-2021

• **Prevention** - We have worked with our partner organisations and strengthened the preventative approach to support vulnerable children, young people and adults.

We have adopted an Early Help Strategy and are supporting families through the Early Response Hub. Alongside this, we have embedded initiatives such as the Family Safeguarding Model and the Troubled Families Programme. As a result, children are supported within their families so that fewer of them require the more intensive interventions, such as child protection plans or entering care.

Vulnerable adults and older people have been supported through the Adult Social Care preventative service to ensure they remain as independent as possible and have access to the services that they need. Those leaving hospital were successfully supported based on reablement and rehabilitation interventions, preventing re-admissions. This area has been impacted on in the last few months by Covid-19, and will require re-focusing during the next two years.

Excellent progress has been made in supporting rough sleepers and preventing individuals or families from becoming homeless or instances of repeat homeless. This will move to our core business set of objectives.

• **Better outcomes and improved satisfaction** - Children in care have achieved good outcomes in terms of stable placements and education outcomes supported by the virtual school. There have been fewer repeat child protection plans and repeat referrals to the service, compared to previous years. Where necessary young people engage well with the drug diversion scheme, and both first time entrants to Youth Justice and re-offending numbers remain low. Adult Social Care service users provided positive feedback about the outcomes they continued to achieve.

Some outcomes for children in care (school attendance and exclusions, health and dental checks) were impacted by Covid-19 restrictions and are prioritised as part of this strategy.

• **Safeguarding against new/emerging risks** - Keeping vulnerable children and adults safe is another outcome delivered by closer working with our partner organisations and ensuring safeguarding enquiries achieve service users' expectations. Our safeguarding teams have adapted their approach and used latest research and learning to ensure service continuity, despite challenges presented by Covid-19.

• **Employment and education for vulnerable young adults** – We have increased support for our care leavers (19-24) and more of them are now in employment and education. Our work to enrol disadvantaged young people into apprenticeship training has been hindered by the pandemic.

### 1.3 What has happened since 2019

• The fact that some services and activities that vulnerable children access have been temporarily closed or are being delivered in alternative ways, has led to new challenges in both identifying and supporting vulnerable children at the earliest possible point in time. In response, children's safeguarding arrangements have managed to maintain standards through better screening and enhanced joint working between professionals from different services.







- The demand for Adult Social Care, in particular for care homes (residential beds), has reduced significantly.
- Employment opportunities for vulnerable young adults have been impacted on because services are having to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has presented additional challenges with regard to supporting apprenticeships for disadvantaged young people, particularly while employees are working remotely.

## 1.4 What we are going to focus on going forward:

**a) Continue to support vulnerable residents at an earlier stage** – This remains an important commitment that will ensure a continuation of the work with our partner organisations. We are revising the Prevention Strategy to encompass a wider range of services and to further reduce the need for vulnerable children to reach a point where they rely on support from statutory services. For vulnerable adults and older people this includes solutions to ensure they are as independent as possible and have access to services to enable this.

**b) Renew the focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and adults** – The intervention of statutory services, working with vulnerable children and young people, will deliver long lasting results that prevent the need for them to return to the social care system. Whilst they are receiving services, improvements will be made to ensure they benefit of stable care placements, reduce their school absences and exclusions and achieve better educational and health outcomes. For vulnerable adults, we will ensure that services provided are appropriately reviewed to support them to be as independent as possible. This includes prompt discharging from hospital and reinstating the hospital pathways based on reablement support. Adults and older people that are victims of abuse, will continue to be appropriately involved to achieve their desired outcomes following statutory enquires.

**c) Support more vulnerable young adults into employment** – Define a strategic approach to support vulnerable adults into employment and expand opportunities for care leavers to access education employment and training. As restrictions are lifted, we will increase the number of apprenticeships being accessed, especially by care leavers, those with disabilities and people from ethnic minority communities.



## Priority

Support everyone to reach their full potential

## 2.1 The original commitments included in the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023:

Improve the **health and wellbeing** of our residents through appropriate interventions and policies

**Help people to help themselves** and others

Support everyone in their **learning journey** to achieve their best



## 2.2 How we have done 2019-2021

- **Health and Wellbeing** - West Berkshire is among the top five councils in the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Health Index, in terms of the overall health of the population. The Council adapted new ways of working to ensure that all decisions made consider the implications on our residents' health.

Residents' health and wellbeing have been supported by setting up the Community Support Hub in partnership with Greenham Trust and Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, helping schools to re-open safely following lockdown restrictions, providing community testing facilities and Covid Marshals, distributing the Covid Winter Grant for those affected financially by the pandemic, providing advice and guidance including information on addressing domestic abuse, and setting up a mental health help line. Some Public Health and community resilience activities have been rescheduled.

Even before the start of the coronavirus pandemic, we improved the arrangements with partner organisations on the Health and Wellbeing Board for preventing and addressing mental health issues.

Work progressed to adopt an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Strategy aiming to build resilience and help to prevent the impact of ACE being passed onto the next generation. This should contribute to a reduction of demand on public services improved mental and physical health and socio-economic benefits.

- **Help people to help themselves** – The work with individuals and groups of volunteers in response to Covid-19, built on existing strong working relationships with our communities and took the approach to a completely new level. Whilst it was not possible to maintain the usual involvement of volunteers in our cultural services, the Council, together with Volunteer Centre West Berkshire and Greenham Trust, worked with 90 community and volunteer groups, with 3,000 volunteers in total, supporting vulnerable residents to access food and medicines and organising activities to support mental health and wellbeing in the wider community.



At the same time, some of the strategic improvement actions continued. The Council adopted a Community Wellbeing Model with befrienders supporting residents to self-care and lead independent lives. A Communications and Engagement Strategy was approved, setting out our objectives and key principles for engagement, including with seldom heard groups, to ensure we meet the needs of those we serve.

Support and guidance was provided to communities working together to produce neighbourhood development plans and operating a community-led planning approach to enable people to shape the future of the areas they live in. New devolution deals with Parish and Town Councils, community forums and other groups, continue to be agreed in order to increase the sustainability of local services.

- **Support learning journeys** – Based on the latest available data, good education attainment results have been achieved at the earlier stages of education, including for disadvantaged pupils in primary schools. Results at the Early Years Foundation Stage compare favourably with other local authorities in England. Better results are required at secondary stage, for the overall cohort of pupils and for those eligible for free school meals. Relevant concerns have been escalated to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

In response to the pandemic's challenges, schools and pupils have been supported through a number of initiatives (e.g. laptops for pupils, Covid-19 risk assessments etc.) so that education for children and young people could continue, via remote learning, when necessary, whilst accommodating vulnerable pupils and key workers' children in school.

A continuation of investment in education (including the opening of two new schools- Highwood Copse and Theale Primary) ensured that pupils got a place in their preferred school and had a good environment in which to learn.

Our rate of young people not in education, employment and training (NEETs) is third best (lowest) in the country.

## 2.3 What has happened since 2019

- The District has not been immune to the tragic effects of the coronavirus pandemic but the loss of lives and the rate of infections locally, were amongst the lowest in the country. The resilience of the residents and local economy are factors that contributed to this, together with the Council's prompt response to Covid-19.

- Education attainment data for 2019/20 academic year is not available as exams and tests were suspended nationally, due to Covid-19. National research suggests that the closure of schools had an impact on pupils' academic development and on their mental health and wellbeing. Gaps between the most disadvantaged pupils and their peers are likely to increase. This is an area that requires more understanding at local level, and recovery intervention.

- Restrictions and the prioritisation of Covid-19 response meant that some health improvement activities (e.g. health checks, antenatal visits, participation in sports and leisure activities) could not be progressed in the usual way. The medium and longer-term impact of this is yet to be determined.

## 2.4 What we are going to focus on going forward:

- a) **Support everyone in their learning journey to achieve their best** – This commitment will be delivered through the implementation of emerging national policies and local solutions so that support to our schools continues, but is adapted to address the consequences of Covid-19 lockdowns. Activities will include direct support programmes for children and their families, stronger coordination of services

in order to address the barriers to learning for disadvantaged children, and assistance to schools and other education providers. Young people and adults will be supported to participate in education, employment, training or life-long learning.

- b) **Improve the health and wellbeing of our residents** – The Council will contribute to producing a Health and Wellbeing Strategy with partner organisations across the region and deliver services to address identified needs. This includes a refocus on the antenatal visits and poor health prevention activities, including health checks to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Supporting participation in sports and leisure activities will aim to increase the level of physical activity in West Berkshire. A particular focus will be to address health inequalities.

- c) **Improve mental health and wellbeing** – We have added this as a separate commitment in response to the negative impacts of Covid-19 on employment, and the effect of lockdown measures on residents from all age groups. We will work with our Health and Wellbeing Board partner organisations to implement the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health Plan. The plan includes activities to better define the needs, to coordinate and to supplement the interventions in response to these needs. It aims to positively impact on lowering suicide rates and levels of self-harm, on supporting people with mental illness, improving the broader quality of life and self-reported wellbeing.

- d) **Enable residents and communities to help themselves and others** – The resilience of our communities made a significant difference in the way we responded to the Covid-19 crisis. We will build on this and implement a community wellbeing model to support individuals to self-care and to lead independent lives, and further strengthen our local communities. We will implement ways to increase engagement with our residents and, in particular, with geographical groups or communities of need and those that are disadvantaged. We will continue our support to enable communities to have more control on decisions that impact them, through Neighbourhood Development Plans and Parish Plans.





Support businesses to start,  
develop and thrive in  
West Berkshire

### 3.1 The original commitments included in the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023:

**Improve the help and guidance for start-ups** and existing small businesses to grow, including facilitation of access to business incubators or similar resources and initiatives.

**Ensure our planning policies enable start-up and growth** of business in the district.

Provide incentives and opportunities to **enable businesses to grow**.

### 3.2 How we have done 2019-2021

• **Improve help and guidance for start-ups and business growth** - We have ensured that business start-ups and small and medium companies wanting to expand, received support from Berkshire Business Support Hub. We promoted the District's economic priorities by expanding business links at events and through projects. During the last year, the Council has promptly distributed a range of grants to over 1,100 businesses to ease the financial pressure on them during the pandemic. This includes grants to support nurseries, childminders and other early-years providers, to ensure they will still be in business once demand for places, currently suppressed by Covid-19, reverts to the usual levels. In addition, advice and support has been provided on how to operate safely in the new environment.

• **Planning policies enable business growth** – Arrangements have been made to ensure that the needs of business are given full consideration in the non-residential planning process. Work has stated to explore the future uses of Newbury Town Centre. A study has been completed to support the development of the Local Plan, to identify the land required for new businesses and housing need in the District.

• **Incentives and opportunities to enable businesses to grow** – We have produced an Economic Development Strategy which details the approach to support business growth in the District. We invested in the emerging, private sector-led, Newbury West Berkshire Economic Development Company to enhance business support, but have changed to an in-house support offer, when the company ceased operations due to its external funding being impacted by Covid-19. In addition events have taken place to support businesses to attract the talent and skills that they require. Over 70 apprenticeship placements have been achieved through the Kick Start scheme. Some initiatives to support the horse racing industry and a careers fair, are on hold due to Covid-19.

### 3.3 What has happened since 2019

• The strong economy in West Berkshire seems less impacted by Covid-19 compared to other parts of the country. The most significant impact has been in hospitality, leisure, wholesale and retail.

• The support required by local businesses completely changed during the pandemic. Advice and support to re-open in a Covid19 secure way, support with distribution of grants from central government and flexibility regarding the payment of Business Rates are some examples of the support that was required.

• Changes brought about by Covid-19, including working from home, particularly by tech companies, increased the vulnerability of town centres.

• Work progressed under other priorities of this strategy, contribute to make the District more attractive and supportive for business start-ups and development. These include investment in infrastructure, particularly digital infrastructure, transport and housing, skills development and availability in West Berkshire, and making the most of our environment in a sustainable way.

### 3.4 What we are going to focus on going forward:

**a. Continue to provide help and guidance for start-ups and existing small businesses to grow, including facilitation of access to business incubators or similar resources and initiatives** – Even more than before, West Berkshire remains Open for Business.

We will welcome start-up and business growth initiatives in the District, which forms part of the Thames Valley Turbo Economy, the strongest regional economy outside of London. We will provide advice and guidance and facilitate businesses' access to the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's Business Growth Hub. We will actively engage with or organise projects and events, in order to expand business links and promote the district's economic priorities, and the support available to businesses.





**b. As part of refreshing the Local Plan, we will strengthen policies to support economic development** – This commitment contributes to the long-term economic development in West Berkshire. We will ensure that the planning framework for the District delivers a cohesive and sustainable development, which gives consideration to the evolving needs of the business sector.

**c. Provide incentives and support for viable businesses in the District, to help areas of hardship** – The immediate future will see a continuation of support for businesses to recover, but also to benefit of the opportunities from Covid-19 impact. Adult social care market is one of the areas of focus.

The Council will facilitate events to attract the talent and skills required by local businesses and host webinars and forums to maintain the communication and engagement with the sector.

The implementation of the Procurement Strategy, embedding social value in procurement and the Inward Investment Strategy, will provide more incentives for the business sector in West Berkshire.

**d. Support town centres to recover from the impact of Covid-19 and adapt to any changes as a result of more working from home** - This commitment is linked primarily with our recovery agenda, but highly relevant for our Council Strategy as the pandemic had a catalytic effect on an existing trend of changing town centres locally and nationally.

We will provide a strategic approach to how our town centres will change by producing Town Centre Master Plans, starting with Newbury and Thatcham, and securing resources for master planning for our other towns.

**e. Implement a new policy on Social Value to generate greater positive economic, environmental and social outcomes** - In line with the 2012 Public Services (Social Value) Act we are going to implement this new policy for the public contracts the Council commissions. This will allow social value considerations to be embedded in our procurement and to place social value at the heart of our procurement practice.

"The strong economy in West Berkshire seems less impacted by Covid-19 compared to other parts of the country. The most significant impact has been in hospitality, leisure, wholesale and retail."



Priority

Develop local infrastructure, including housing to support and grow the local economy

4.1 The original commitments included in the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023:

- Develop an **Integrated Infrastructure Plan** to deliver regeneration, housing, flood prevention and alleviation schemes, and travel and transport infrastructure
- Further **develop digital infrastructure** and information assets in the District
- Enhance the **arts, culture and leisure offering** of the District



## 4.2 How we have done 2019-2021

• **Integrated Infrastructure Plan** – Infrastructure development progressed well. In particular, the statutory stages of producing the Local Plan and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan are being completed according to the schedule.

Good progress has been made to deliver solutions for keeping the traffic moving efficiently and safely, such as an intelligent systems for traffic management (the A4 Thatcham Intelligent Transport Journey Time Measurement System). This contributes to reduce CO2 and other traffic related emissions.

Progress has been made to deliver new houses needed in the District. Over 609 additional homes have been completed, including 216 affordable homes. We have adopted a new Housing Strategy.

We have completed a number of flood alleviation schemes which provide protection to an additional 607 properties in the District, achieving the objective set for the four years of the Council Strategy.

• **Develop digital infrastructure** – Enhanced access to digital communications to premises in West Berkshire.

Superfast Broadband has been made available to over 72,000 properties in the District.

A strong digital infrastructure ensured an increased resilience in responding to Covid-19 challenges, including by supporting residents to work from home and pupils to continue education remotely.

Progress has been made to install more wireless connectivity infrastructure (Long Range Wide Area Networks) to support the emerging 'Internet of Things' devices and services.

• **Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering**– We have developed a new Cultural Heritage Strategy, and a Leisure Strategy by engaging with key partners and with residents in the District. We set out in more detail our plans for offering access to a broader range of leisure facilities

(some refurbished) and services, and to increase accessibility to cultural activities for residents that otherwise would not be able to participate.

## 4.3 What has happened since 2019

• Working from home is predicted to continue and commuting journeys to reduce post Covid-19.

• Traffic volumes have reduced and support has been provided by the Council to enable active travel alternatives.

• The medium-term impact of Covid-19 on the public transport is not clear.

• Digital connectivity is essential to support new ways of working and for the establishment of new businesses. 99% of the premises in Berkshire are able to access Superfast Broadband. Continuing to invest in a world-class digital infrastructure in Berkshire is key to ensuring that it maintains its current strong social and economic position.

• The culture, art and leisure sectors have been significantly impacted by Covid-19.

## 4.4 What we are going to focus on going forward:

**a. Develop an Integrated Infrastructure Plan to deliver regeneration, housing, flood prevention and alleviation schemes, and travel and transport infrastructure** – We will complete the necessary work to produce and approve a new Local Plan and



Infrastructure Delivery Plan. In the meantime, we will continue the delivery of regeneration projects and approval of housing development, including affordable housing.

Focus on maintaining the traffic flow in the District will ensure appropriate development and maintenance of our road network, in line with housing growth, and using intelligent traffic management systems to monitor traffic and to minimise the impact on the environment.

In order to further mitigate the risk of damage to properties as a result of flooding, we will develop additional flood alleviation and prevention schemes and apply for funding to DEFRA in order to secure resources for their implementation. We will continue to work together with our professional partners and local Flood Forums to address the needs of residents who have experienced or are at risk of flooding.

**b. Increase the terrestrial and mobile digital connectivity** - The need for technology and infrastructure to enable remote working, learning and interacting became even more evident during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As the District already achieved excellent coverage in terms of access to Superfast Broadband, the focus over the next few years will be how we approach the next stage of connectivity development. This will include access to Full Fibre (fibre-to-premises technology), the extension of 4G mobile network coverage so that it is accessible everywhere in the District, and initiating the development of 5G network.

**c. Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering** – The new Cultural Heritage Strategy introduced a focus on developing partnership working with key players in the sector. It aims to support local cultural organisations through inward investment (e.g. working together to secure external resources), producing and promoting cultural projects that engage residents and attract visitors. It will enhance the accessibility of cultural and heritage activities for different groups of residents and deliver actions to protect and promote our unique cultural history, heritage and environment.

"Progress has been made to deliver new houses needed in the District. Over 609 additional homes have been completed, including 216 affordable homes."







Maintain a  
green district

## 5.1 The original commitments included in the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023:

Develop more **sustainable transport solutions** which protect the environment

Promote and improve **cycle ways** in the District

Develop opportunities and expertise to take advantage of the **production, storage and utilisation of green energy**

**Minimise the impact on the environment** in delivering services such as the use assistive technologies in social care

## 5.2 How we have done 2019-2021

- **Sustainable transport solutions** - Progress has been made to strengthen the strategic framework by adopting the Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan, and working towards the adoption of a new Local Transport Plan by July 2022.

In Thatcham, we have installed sensors to monitor air quality, in preparation for installing digital, signposting infrastructure to suggest alternative, faster and less polluting routes. We are converting the Council's fleet to ultra-low emission vehicles.

We are resolving legal and technical issues to be able to further expand the network of electric vehicle charging points across the District and install them in all the Council's public car parks.

- **Promote and improve cycle ways** -

Improvements have been made by extending the cycle ways in the District. The Council completed the Thatcham section of the new National Cycle Route- NCN 422 Sustrans route, delivered two kilometres of additional cycle routes, and produced a cycling and walking infrastructure Plan for Newbury and Thatcham. In addition, measures have been implemented to support active travel.

Residents have been invited to collaborate with the Council to design more active travel schemes to enhance safety, the environment and air quality.



- **Production, storage and utilisation of green energy** - Energy is generated from renewable sources following the installation of solar panels across all Council estate pilot sites. A robust programme, based on feasibility and prioritisation of additional sites, is progressing.

Feasibility work has been completed for installing 2 megawatts of solar photovoltaic (PV) to generate energy from a new solar farm.

- **Minimise the impact on the environment in delivering services** – Successes in this area include the uptake of telecare in Adult Social Care contributing to a reduced need for long-term services, enabling people to continue to live safely in their communities, where possible, and localising the delivery of care services to minimise travel. We are making further improvements for the recycling of household waste by completing feasibility plans for separate food-waste collection. Arrangements are in place to ensure that all decisions made by the Council are informed by an assessment of their impact on the environment.

Plans to invest in measures to naturally capture and reduce carbon dioxide (large scale afforestation and natural regeneration in rural areas, urban tree planting etc.) are being progressed

## 5.3 What has happened since 2019

- The Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019.

- The Environment Strategy sets a target of achieving carbon neutrality in West Berkshire, by 2030. A detailed Environment Strategy Delivery Plan has been approved.

- Half of the respondents to the residents' survey (June 2020) reported that they are planning to walk and cycle more than in the previous year. Lockdown measures created the opportunity for the initiation and implementation of more active travel measures.

- In November 2020 the Prime Minister set out his ambitious ten point plan for a green industrial revolution



## 5.4 What we are going to focus on going forward:

### a. Continue to develop more sustainable transport solutions to protect the environment

– The Council will support the expansion of the electric vehicle charging points network, installing charging points in all Council owned public car parks. We will continue to replace the Council's existing vehicles with a fleet of ultra-low emission vehicles.

Installation of sensors to monitor CO2 levels, in real time, together with variable traffic signs, will enable an intelligent transport system to suggest the best routes, in order to improve traffic flow and air quality.

**b. Develop and implement infrastructure to encourage active travel** – Measures to expand the walking and cycling routes in the District will continue. The developments will be coordinated through a new Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Cycle storage facilities and cycle hubs will be provided to enable more active travel. Work with public transport operators will focus on recovering from the impact of Covid-19 with an aim to increase passenger numbers.

**c. Expand the production, storage and utilisation of renewable energy** – The success of the pilot project to install solar panels, influenced the decision to continue to expand their use across the Council's estate and other areas in the District. We will progress with the installation of additional solar photo-voltaic panels, as part of a new solar farm.

**d. Minimise the impact on the environment when delivering our services** – Consideration will be given regarding sources of energy used by the Council to deliver services, and to possible changes to ensure that the electricity used is from renewable sources. The offsetting of some of the CO2 produced will be achieved by investing in solutions to naturally capture and reduce carbon dioxide, such as urban tree planning and rural afforestation.

To further increase the amount of household waste that is recycled, composted, reused and recovered, we will implemented a separate food waste collection component to our waste management service.

"The Council will support the expansion of the electric vehicle charging points network, installing them in all Council public car parks."



Priority

Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships

## 6.1 The original commitments included in the Council Strategy 2019 – 2023:

**Expand our work with partner organisations** and communities to improve services for local residents

Increase the **sustainability** of our business models by expanding on the initiatives to **generate income** for supporting vital Council's services

Implement a Workforce strategy which supports **leadership development, recruitment and retention and employee wellbeing**

Use data to better understand our services' beneficiaries to improve the way we interact with them and the services we provide

## 6.2 How we have done 2019-2021

- **Expand partnership working** – Transformed the ways in which residents access health and social care services by formalising plans for partnership working at regional level (Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership). At local level, we have agreed a Primary Care Network plan with local Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure residents receive better services as a result of multi-disciplinary teams of professionals working together (GP practices, community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services) and joint commissioning of services.

Community engagement conducted with our statutory partners and community and voluntary organisations, has focused on practical activities to respond to Covid-19.

- **Increase sustainability by expanding on the initiatives to generate income** – the Council detailed its approach to generate income in a Strategic Position Statement on Commercialisation. Areas where the Council can develop a commercial approach have been identified and prioritised as part of this statement. Investments made by the Council generate an annual income of approximately £1million.

A Community Municipal Investment (CMI) Bond, the first initiative in the UK that allows residents to invest in local renewable energy projects, has been implemented.

- **Leadership development, recruitment and retention, and employee wellbeing** – Solutions to support employees' wellbeing have been brought forward and implemented to address challenges presented by Covid-19. The development of a leadership programme for managers, is being progressed.

Actions to position the Council as an 'employer of choice' ensured an employee turnover rate below the maximum threshold.

- **Better understand the beneficiaries of our services to ensure improved services** – Strategic action has been taken to ensure a coordinated approach on how the Council communicates, consults and engages with the local communities. It is built on learnings from the excellent interaction between the Council, its partner organisations, residents and community groups, whilst responding to the Coronavirus pandemic. A residents' survey took place in June 2020 to capture their views and inform the Recovery Strategy and other plans.

A review of the Council's services identified new ways of working which are being progressed through the Transformation Programme.

Solutions have been implemented- increasing opportunities for residents to interact directly with Councillors and officers, including live YouTube and Facebook events, and by broadcasting Council and other Committee meetings.



## 6.3 What has happened since 2019

- The social and economic resilience of the District meant that the impact of Covid-19 was reduced, compared to other regions in the country. However, the pandemic highlighted the need to target inequalities.

- The response to Covid-19 made partnership working between the Council, public and private sector organisations, residents and community groups an essential requirement in order to ensure residents received the support they needed.

- Government initiatives have been implemented locally to support residents, self-employed professionals and businesses, by making available and distributing a number of grants to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

- Working from home is impacting on the ability to deliver face to face training and learning sessions, but online alternatives are emerging.

- Digitisation of services has accelerated as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

- A review of the 2036 Vision is required and amendments made to reflect the latest changes and the changes and the progress made to date.

## 6.4 What we are going to focus on going forward:

- a) **Expand our work with partner organisations and communities to improve services for local residents and to tackle inequalities** – We are committed to contribute- alongside our statutory, voluntary and community organisations- to deliver the priorities of our Vision 2036. Together with partner organisations from the Berkshire West region, we are defining the outcomes and delivery solutions for improving the health and wellbeing of our residents as part of a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. At local level we will produce a community engagement framework. We will work to strengthen our relationship with all Town and Parish Councils in West Berkshire.

- b) **Continue the implementation of the Workforce Strategy which supports staff engagement leadership development, recruitment, retention and employee wellbeing** – The continuation of service delivery whilst responding to Covid-19 has demonstrated the resilience and dedication of our employees. We will continue with the delivery of our Workforce Strategy to ensure support is available for front line staff and for those in managerial roles.

- c) **Expand on the initiatives to generate income for supporting vital Council services** – We will continue the schemes already put in place to generate new funding streams for supporting the delivery of the Council's services and will look at solutions to identify and implement new ones. We will encourage our staff to suggest new ideas and take forward those that are viable- in terms of service improvement, increased efficiencies and/ or generating income. We will review the Council's assets to ensure they are used in the most effective way.

- d) **Enhance communication and engagement with our residents to develop a better understanding of their needs** – The three main work strands that we will implement include: better communication, including using social media and increasing our success rate in reaching the seldom heard groups, better consultation aiming to obtain more representative feedback from all sub-groups of residents living in the District and better engagement with our communities and individuals, building on the excellent work that took place during the pandemic.

- e) **Expand the accessibility of our services through digital means** – As digital interactions have developed exponentially, using remote working and digital communication software, there is a greater incentive than ever to develop digital alternatives to enable residents to access our services.





# Appendix 1 – Council Strategy Delivery Plan

## Priority 1. Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes

Commitments	Actions	Outcomes
<b>Continue to support vulnerable residents at an earlier stage.</b>	Work with partner organisations to review and fully implement the Prevention Strategy.	Expand the availability and take up of services and opportunities available within the community to support vulnerable children and adults in a way which reduces the need to access statutory services.
	Support vulnerable adults through the Three Conversations Model at the preventative level.	Ensure Adult Social Care clients are as independent as possible and have access to the services they need.
<b>Renew the focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and vulnerable adults.</b>	Work with children and families that benefit from our statutory social services to ensure long lasting results.	Those children and young people who require interventions are safeguarded and prepared for adulthood.
	Provide better services for Children in Care.	Our reduced cohort of Children in Care with more complex needs will have more stable placements, reduced school absences and better educational and health outcomes.
	Increase the proportion of clients who receive an annual review or contract.	Ensure appropriate levels and type of support is provided to Adult Social Care users who are eligible for services under the Care Act. Service users report that services they have accessed made them feel safe and secure.
	Refocus work with our health partners to ensure that our interventions for those leaving hospital are based on reablement and rehabilitation.	Reduced delays in the transfer of care from hospital (DTCO)  Ensure that people do not need to be readmitted following hospital discharge.

<b>Support more vulnerable young adults into employment.</b>	Adopt a strategic framework to improve the employment opportunities of vulnerable people in the District.	Increased employment rate for vulnerable young people.
	Increase support for our care leavers.	A greater proportion of our care leavers are in employment, education or training.
	Increase to 114 a year the number of apprenticeships within the Council including placements for vulnerable young adults.	Increase the number of apprenticeships being assessed, especially by care leavers, those with disabilities and from ethnic minority communities.

Priority 2. Support everyone to reach their full potential

Commitments	Actions	Outcomes
Support everyone in their learning journey to achieve their best.	Support schools to improve education attainment, this will include addressing the impact of Covid-19.	Improve the local authority ranking of educational attainment at all key stages.
	Continue with our investment of over £69 million in school places across the District.	Ensure that all children have access to a local school place, with at least 95% of the children in the District accessing one of their top three preferred schools.
	Implementation of the Disadvantaged Strategy.	Improve the education attainment of pupils in the disadvantaged cohort.
	Support engagement in education, employment or training and life-long learning.	Maintain low levels of NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training).
		Increase take up of life-long learning by people from areas of low participation in education, areas of deprivation and those who are unemployed.
Improve the health and wellbeing of our residents	Deliver public health programmes that have been delayed or interrupted by Covid-19 (e.g. health checks, national measurement programme, antenatal visits, smoking cessation).	Reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.  Reduce the prevalence of overweight and obese people.  Encourage smoking cessation.
	Support participation in sports and leisure activities	Increase the level of physical activity in West Berkshire (to at least 30 minutes of exercise a week).  Prevent increase in obesity prevalence.

Improve mental health and wellbeing	Work with our Health and Wellbeing Board of partner organisations to implement the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health Plan.	Positively impact on lowering suicide rates and levels of self-harm.  Positively impact on providing support for people with mental illnesses and the quality of life and self-reported wellbeing.
	Implement a new Community Wellbeing model.	Support individuals to self-care, lead independent lives and strengthen our local communities.
	Help communities who wish to complete a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).	Increase the number of NDP groups active in West Berkshire to manage their developments in their areas.
Enable residents and communities to help themselves and others	More communities are supported to produce or refresh Parish Plans and develop other community plans.	Residents have the opportunity to express their views and influence how they want their community to develop.
	Ensure that mechanisms are put in place to effectively engage vulnerable and hard to reach groups.	Hard to reach groups feel that they are being listened to.
	Provide support and encourage community engagement through volunteering.	Volunteering opportunities in the District are maximised.
	Develop an Advocacy Service for Diverse Ethnic Communities.	Increase the engagement with residents from Diverse Ethnic Communities in West Berkshire



### Priority 3. Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire

Commitments	Actions	Outcomes
Continue to provide help and guidance for start-ups and existing small businesses to grow.	More business start-up and small and medium companies are referred each year to Berkshire Business Growth Hub.	Business start-up and small and medium companies receive support from Berkshire Business Growth Hub.
	Increase the number of economic development events and projects delivered each year.	Expand business links, promote the District’s economic priorities and the support available for businesses.
As part of refreshing the Local Plan, strengthen policies to support economic development.	Complete an Employment Land Study.	Allocate any identified employment land need through the Local Plan Review.
	Consult Economic Development Service on ever non-residential planning application.	Ensure the needs of businesses are given full consideration in the non-residential planning process.
Provide incentives and support for viable businesses in the District, to help areas of hardship.	Support the social care market to recover and grow.	Social care market growth sustains the changing care and support needs of our residents.
	Showcase at events the employment opportunities available in the District.	Support businesses to attract the talent and skills that they require.
	Implement our procurement strategy.  Hold supplier forums to support local SMEs to bid for WBC procurement.	The new Procurement Strategy promotes and supports local businesses to bid for council procurement.
	Support rural businesses to diversify. Support the Lambourn h	Rural estates are supported to diversify.  Further ‘greening’ of the farming infrastructure such as solar panels.
	Hold quarterly webinars to inform businesses of our work.	Economic sector players interact with a business friendly Council and benefit from the support that they receive.

Support town centres to recover from the Covid-19 impact and adapt to any changes as a result of more working from home.  Implement a new policy on Social Value to generate greater positive economic, environmental and social outcomes.	Deliver Newbury Town Centre Master Plan with a focus on economic development.  Complete the Thatcham Master Plan.	Improve the public realm and the green spaces available to residents.  Supporting the evolving needs of the businesses located in the District.
	Develop the policy and implement it primarily by using the proxy values as identified in the National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMS) Framework	Generate greater positive economic, environmental and social outcomes for West Berkshire from the public contracts the Council commissions.

## Priority 4. Develop local infrastructure, including housing, to support and grow the local economy

Commitments	Actions	Outcomes
<b>Develop an Integrated Infrastructure Plan to deliver regeneration, housing, flood prevention and alleviation schemes, and travel and transport infrastructure.</b>	Grant planning permission for at least 2,200 additional houses (of which 500 will be affordable housing) and associated infrastructure.	Completion of additional residential units including affordable houses.  Local Plan and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan produced and approved.
	Develop and maintain our road network to accommodate the housing growth (in the context of the climate emergency declaration) by investing at least £39m between 2019-2023 in transport and infrastructure.	There is no deterioration in congestion levels in urban areas as a result of developments in line with the current housing delivery plan. This will be measured using journey time information on key strategic routes in the Districts' urban centres.
	Deliver the Newbury Train Station improvements project	Improvements to Newbury Train Station.
	Develop flood alleviation schemes and apply for funding	Plans agreed for future flood alleviation schemes
<b>Further develop digital infrastructure and information assets in the District</b>	Extend the connectivity of premises in West Berkshire to Full-Fibre.	Enhance access to digital communications (Fibre-to-Premises) in West Berkshire.
	Facilitate the building of more wireless connectivity infrastructure.	Support the emerging Internet of Things devices and services.
	Work with Thames Valley Berkshire, local Enterprise Partnership and with lead communication technology companies to investigate the viability of Newbury becoming a 5G test bed initiative.	Secure a 5G test bed initiative in West Berkshire and ensure Newbury becomes a 5G town by 2022. receive.

<b>Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering of the District</b>	Refurbish the leisure centres in Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford to provide new and upgraded facilities with a broader range of leisure services.	Residents can access refurbished facilities with a broader range of leisure services available.
	Ensure that our sports and leisure facilities comply with a higher accessibility accreditation level.	Increase the accessibility of our sports and leisure facilities for our residents.
	Implement the West Berkshire Cultural Heritage Strategy to improve access for all and promote health and wellbeing.	Identify and deliver projects which support the 6 strategic themes in the strategy to improve the arts, culture and the local heritage.
	Conduct a Review of the Libraries Service	Identify improvements to the service to ensure it meets community needs.



Priority 5. Maintain a green district

Commitments	Actions	Outcomes
<b>Continue the development of more sustainable transport solutions which protect the environment.</b>	Deliver the actions as identified within the Council's ULEV Strategy, to include: Installation of electric vehicle charge points and ensure 25% of the Council's fleet uses ULEV by 2022.	20% of the parking bays in all council public car parks have access to an active charging point. A wider network of charging points is available across the District.  Council vehicle fleet is renewed with ultra-low emission vehicles.
	Install the necessary infrastructure to be able to suggest alternative routes by using intelligent transport systems and real time air quality information.	Improve traffic flow and air quality.
<b>Develop and implement infrastructure to encourage active travel.</b>	Work with public transport operators to increase the use of public transport.	Increased numbers of passengers on public transport.
	Production of a Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan for West Berkshire.	Improved cycle ways and walking routes.
	Delivery of 100% of the proposed primary cycle route and 50% of the proposed secondary cycle route, for Newbury and Thatcham, as set out in the Local Transport Plan.	Improved cycle ways in the District.
	Ensure sufficient cycle storage capacity at primary and secondary schools in the District.	Increase cycle storage capacity at all secondary schools. Increase covered and secure cycle storage available at all primary schools.
	Install a network of permanent automatic active travel monitoring sites at key locations on the cycling and walking primary network.	Digital infrastructure is available for monitoring active travel.

<b>Expand the production, storage and utilisation of renewable energy.</b>	Expand the use of solar panels across the Council's estate and beyond (community groups and businesses).	Generate energy from renewable sources.
	Submit planning permission for a 75 acre solar farm at Grazeley.	Generate energy from renewable sources.
	Install 2 megawatts of solar PV to generate energy from a new solar farm (photovoltaic power station).	Generate energy from renewable sources.
<b>Minimise the impact on the environment when delivering our services.</b>	Work with stakeholders and central energy contract electricity suppliers to ensure that the Council's electricity supply is from confirmed 'green' / renewable sources.	100% of the Council's electricity supply comes from renewable sources.
	Invest in measures to naturally capture and reduce carbon dioxide.  Undertake a scheme of urban tree planting.	Urban tree planting has taken place and the impact is recorded quantitatively such as percentage increase in canopy cover per area.
	Research accredited carbon offsetting schemes for potential Council participation.	Carbon offsetting options are identified.
	Review the municipal waste collection regime in the District.	Improve levels of the household waste recycled, composted, reused and recovered.

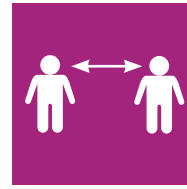


## Priority 6. Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships

Commitments	Actions	Outcomes
<b>Expand our work with partner organisations and communities to improve services for local residents and tackle inequalities.</b>	Support the Health and Wellbeing Board to refresh the Vision 2036.	Progress is made with the implementation of West Berkshire Vision 2036.
	Agree health and wellbeing priorities and the approach to deliver them by working together with partner organisations at regional level.	Produce and approve a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy with our partner organisations in Berkshire West.
	Develop a Community Engagement Framework with our statutory partners and community and voluntary sector organisations.	A framework for community engagement agreed.
	To conduct a review of current activity to develop an understanding of best practice and options for improvement, and to prepare a joint report with Parish & Town Councils.	Evidence, obtained through surveys and feedback, of an increasingly positive and productive relationship with Town and Parish Councils.
<b>Continue the implementation of the Workforce Strategy which supports staff engagement, leadership development, recruitment, retention, and employee wellbeing.</b>	Position the Council as an ‘employer of choice’.	Maintain an appropriate level of turnover and increase the proportion of posts advertised, by the Council, that are filled first time.
	Managers participate in a new leadership programme.	Leadership programme supports the leadership competency framework and the enhancement of coaching skills.
	Use positive action, as permitted under the Equality Act, to attract people from under-represented groups into the organisation and into higher graded positions.	Ensure that we have an even more inclusive and diverse workforce.

<b>Expand on the initiatives to generate income for supporting vital Council services.</b>	Review all of the Council’s assets through an asset challenge process.	Establish future use, maintenance and disposal requirements of assets across the Council's estate.
	Approve a Corporate Landlord Strategy	Implement a Corporate Landlord model
	To introduce a new scheme for generating staff suggestions to replace Lions Lair scheme.	Staff suggestions are identified and, where viable, implemented to deliver service improvements, savings and/or income generation.
<b>Enhance communication and engagement with our residents to develop a better understanding of their needs.</b>	Social media content is expanded to assist in helping to engage seldom heard groups.	Increased engagement with target groups.
	Deliver a representative residents survey.	Residents’ survey results are representative for the entire District.
	Maintaining signposting and connections to community support functions.	Residents are signposted to community support functions, and positive feedback is received from them.
<b>Expand the accessibility of our services through digital means.</b>	Continue to pursue an approach based on ‘digital by default’.	Residents have increased options to access the services offered by the Council through digital means.

# Covid-19: Supporting Our Communities





# Introduction

It's true to say that this really has been a year like no other for our communities, and for the Council.

We're incredibly proud of the way local people have responded to the pandemic. Over the past year we've seen communities rally around to look after one another, and an outpouring of support for frontline services, particularly the NHS, and other caring professions. It is a long list but we extend our gratitude to the NHS, carers, community groups and all the key workers who have played their part supporting our communities so admirably over the past year.

At the Council we're proud to have played our part responding to the pandemic. From helping to coordinate the community response, supporting local businesses, to working with schools in delivering online learning, we've been busy working to support you. Every one of our teams has been affected and each has risen to the challenge magnificently.

Over the next few pages you can read more about some of our activities and achievements. As we look ahead with optimism for the coming months we wanted to reflect on just how much has been achieved by the Council and our communities, and tell you a little more about our longer-term plans for recovery.

West Berkshire is a superb place and its communities equally so. The future looks brighter now, and as we move forward we have every confidence that the district will bounce back and continue to be a great place to live, work and learn.



**Nick Carter**  
Chief Executive



**Cllr Lynne Doherty**  
Leader of West Berkshire Council

# Key Achievements



Community Support  
Hub established to  
support vulnerable  
residents



100% schools  
offered remote  
learning to pupils



Four  
community  
testing sites  
in operation

83% staff working  
remotely to continue  
service delivery



Created and adopted new  
strategies for the future,  
including our Environment  
Strategy



More than £40m  
paid in business  
grants

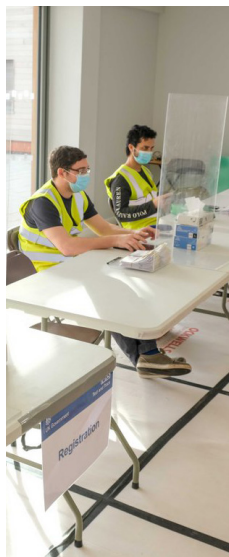
41,000  
residents  
receiving weekly  
Covid e-bulletin



More than 70 meetings streamed  
live, and viewed 14,000 times



# Community Response



4,574 calls to the  
Community  
Support Hub

Community  
Support Hub  
created to support  
community  
groups, and  
the most  
vulnerable



Four  
community  
testing sites  
in operation

£371,000  
paid from  
Winter Grant  
Scheme

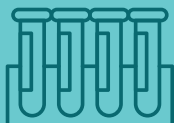


Supported the local  
foodbank by coordinating  
volunteers and deliveries



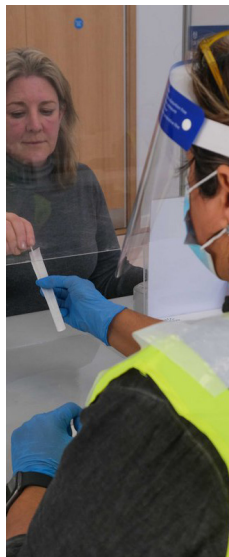
91 staff  
volunteering in  
Community  
Support Hub

3,721  
applications  
for COVID  
Winter Grant



6,000 people tested at  
Community Testing Sites

# Community Response



£200,000 for mental health support



479 residents contacted by Local Contract Tracing service



Transported key workers & children of key workers to school



1,323 applications for Test and Trace Support Payments



Self-isolation packs created

90+ community groups work with Community Support Hub



£292,000 spent on Free School Meal vouchers



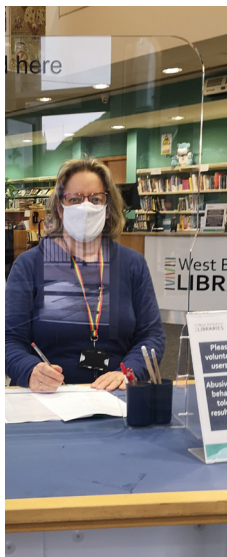
3000+ volunteers supporting the community response



# Supporting Residents



151,000 recycling  
centre visits booked  
online



104,000 items borrowed  
from libraries – and  
new Order and Collect  
service launched

Supported 43  
care homes  
offering  
support, advice  
and infection  
control training



900 doorstep  
deliveries by  
library staff



Library services moved  
online – including  
storytimes, book groups  
and code club

500 young people  
directed to  
mental health  
support services



2,000 laptops  
delivered to  
families who  
need them



280 gifts for  
vulnerable residents  
in Christmas Giving  
appeal

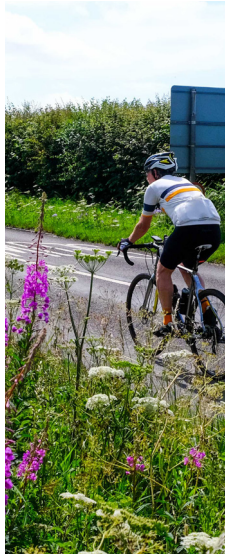


Schools provided lessons for key worker  
and special needs children on site

# Supporting Residents



**Holiday Activities  
and Food  
Programme run at  
15 schools**



**£495,000 for community  
groups to deliver  
local projects**

**£1m raised through  
climate change bonds**



**£619,000 for Active  
Travel Schemes**



**Community Champion  
Awards recognise  
14 groups and 32  
individuals**

**£253,000 to support  
rough sleepers**



**Two new schools  
completed in  
Theale and  
Newbury**



**£1.7m awarded to  
bring full fibre to  
schools**

**Plans for  
£10m solar farm  
announced**



**£302,000 in financial relief to  
local bus operators for concessionary  
fares reimbursement**



# Supporting Business



**£40m of business grants processed**

**£4.25m Closed Business Lockdown Payments**



**20 temporary pavement licences issued**



**£6.8m Local Restriction Support Grant**



**47 grants totalling £94,000 paid under Christmas Support Payment**

**£1.9m Additional Restrictions Grants distributed**



**New town centre signage to support social distancing**

**Processed furlough scheme payments**

**Business rate holidays granted**

**Business support provided including information packs, webinars and virtual drop-in surgeries**



**Road closures in Newbury supporting social distancing during summer 2020**

# Communications & Engagement

2m views  
of Council  
tweets



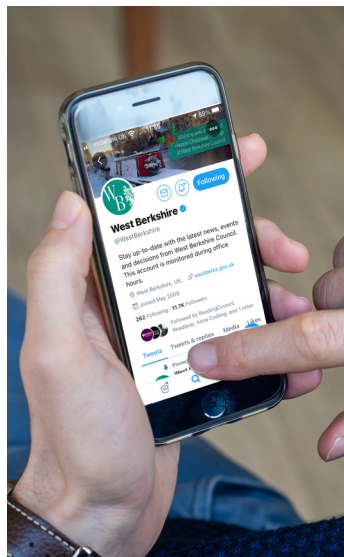
More than  
9,000,000 website  
page views



3m  
copies of  
e-newsletter  
delivered



205 Zoom  
webinars  
held with  
3,533  
participants



Four #AskLynne  
Facebook Live  
residents briefings  
with the Leader

Information  
leaflets sent  
70,000 homes



121  
consultation  
and  
engagement  
activities



National  
campaigns  
shared locally



Local Outbreak Engagement  
Board met regularly



# Covid-19: Our plan for recovery



Ensuring the district recovers from the effects of Covid-19 is a priority for the Council, and has been for some time. Last summer we began planning for life after the pandemic to ensure West Berkshire is able to renew itself after a turbulent year, and remains a great place to live, work and learn.

The response to Covid-19 has shown that our communities are tightknit, resilient and determined to help one another during times of crisis. The collective response to the pandemic was fantastic, and we want to build on this community spirit as we recover.

However, we also recognise that coronavirus has also had an adverse impact and that some residents have been more affected than others. We want to support the district in bouncing back and in particular to tackle any health, economic and learning inequalities which have been caused by the pandemic.

## Vision

To recover three of the core elements that make West Berkshire a great place to live; health, education and the economy, and to ensure a renewed and enhanced focus on our community, environment and engagement. Our Strategy is for everyone but in particular those most affected, now, and into the future by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

On the opposite page you can see the seven areas we will focus on in the coming months to support the district in recovering from the pandemic.

An updated Recovery and Renewal Strategy will be published on our website soon, and will provide more information about what we will deliver on each of our priority areas.

You can also receive updates on our progress direct to your inbox by signing up to our residents' newsletters at [www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp)

# Renewal



**To help the district recover from Covid-19 we will focus on the following seven areas for renewal:**

**1**

Recovering West Berkshire's health and social wellbeing to ensure we remain one of the healthiest places in the country, whilst at the same time doing more to address health inequalities.

**2**

Ensuring economic recovery and renewal, with a focus on those who have lost their jobs, notably the young, women and the disadvantaged; supporting those sectors most impacted by Covid-19; and ensuring we continue the journey of repurposing our Town Centres for the future.

**3**

Supporting our children and young people and our schools with a focus on the most vulnerable.

**4**

Taking the opportunity to work with our local communities to accelerate the delivery of our environmental objectives.

**5**

Enhancing our communications and community engagement.

**6**

Improving our customers' experience of us with an enhanced efficiency and openness in how we work and share information.

**7**

Seizing the positives from the pandemic but not forgetting those we have lost; those whose lives will be forever changed; and those who have supported our local communities during the pandemic, including our own staff.



# Keeping In Touch



We're proud to be part of the local community, and to be delivering services which will make our district a better place today, tomorrow and in the years to come. Keep in touch with us to find out about the work we are doing in communities across West Berkshire.

## Newsletters

Our e-newsletters give you our latest news, events and decisions direct to your inbox. As well as our weekly Residents Bulletin, you can also sign up for specific newsletters about our libraries, waste and recycling and business – and more!

Subscribe at [www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp)

## Social Media

Follow us on social media:



Over the past year we have achieved a lot, but we couldn't have done this alone. We want to thank all the partners who worked with us during the coronavirus pandemic, and helped support the residents and businesses of West Berkshire.



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

WBC/SS/CB/0421