

Report to Woolhampton Parish Council

District Councillor: Chris Read, Member of West Berkshire Council for Bucklebury Ward

Date: 19-01-2026

Full Council (extraordinary) – 29th January
Executive Meeting (extraordinary) – 29th January

Libraries

Groundbreaking report shows social value of West Berkshire's libraries

Libraries are supporting mental health and wellbeing through the provision of volunteering opportunities

A groundbreaking new report from national charity Libraries Connected shows that public libraries in West Berkshire deliver at least £12,221 in value each year by supporting mental health and wellbeing through the provision of volunteering opportunities, particularly among older people.

Commissioned by the South East regional network of Libraries Connected, the research was carried out by public policy consultancy Shared Intelligence using official government guidance to measure the economic impact of library activities. Data was collected over 12 weeks in summer 2025 from West Berkshire and eleven other South East library services.

Using Treasury-approved methods, the team calculated the monetary value of the activities, including NHS savings, productivity gains and the personal value placed on improved wellbeing, concluding that volunteering in West Berkshire libraries creates over £12,221 each year in wellbeing value, reducing isolation and boosting life satisfaction.

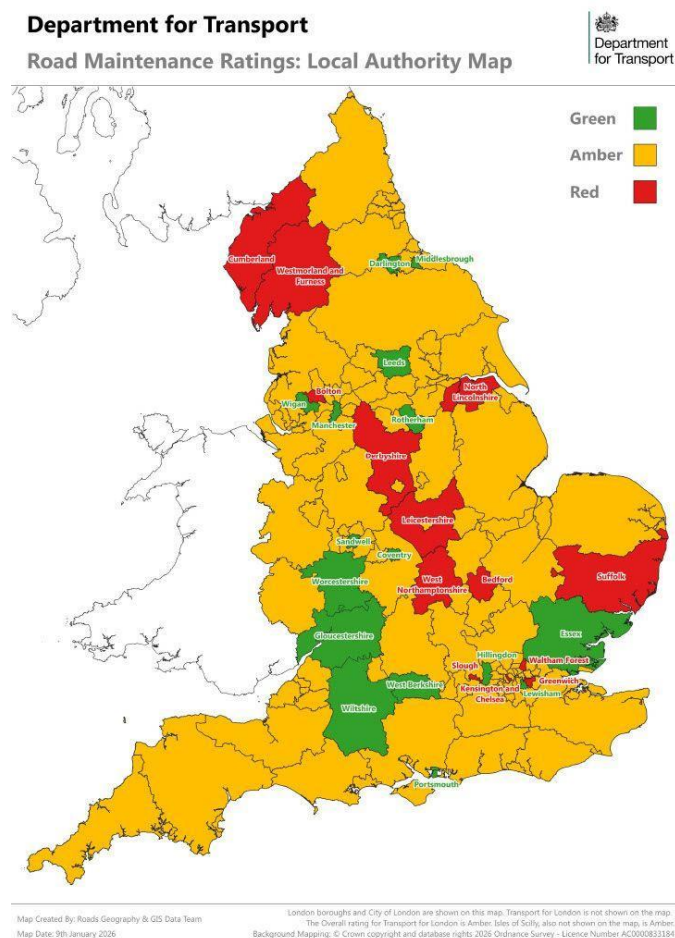
The researchers point out that these figures are conservative estimates, and the true value is likely to be much greater.

The research was supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which oversees library policy and marks a breakthrough in presenting library value in terms that align with government decision-making.

The report shows how libraries help to reduce pressure on health and social care services by offering early, low-cost support in the community.

Highways

Report on the BBC website give West Berkshire a “green” rating on potholes [Potholes map rates council road repair progress - BBC News](#)



Since the low point in West Berks of 2022 there has been an increase in focus on resurfacing and potholes to try to reverse the managed decline in road conditions.

That is not to say that more cannot be done, and I will focus to chasing up on the major potholes seen and reported to me (many thanks to Cllr Phil Teal on his latest report). After lobbying from myself and residents we also have also got a reverse on decision on the Cox’s Lane depression and pothole (old badgers den issue) which hopefully will be dealt with soon.

Reading Borough Council Land Grab

In response to Reading Borough Council writing to the government for a “land grab” of the eastern wards, residents have responded with a definite “Non”. Latest from Purley Residents in Purley on Thames are backing staying in West Berkshire in the latest parish survey resisting Reading Borough Council’s expansionist plans into eastern parts of the district.

Latest Youth Survey

Young people are feeling happier, safer and more supported, according to the latest survey undertaken by West Berkshire Council.

This year's survey reached over 5,000 secondary school-aged students, including, for the first time, home-educated students.

One of the most positive findings is the rise in student happiness. Compared with the previous survey, more young people say they feel happy at school and satisfied with their educational progress. These improvements reflect the dedication of local schools, families, and staff to our younger residents.

Safety is another area where West Berkshire's young people are feeling increasingly positive.

Nearly all respondents said they feel safe in their local area and at school, with these figures now above the national average. Alongside feeling safer, young people also spoke highly of the range of things to do locally, with satisfaction levels outstripping those in other parts of the country.

The survey also revealed the strength of support networks available to young people. Most said they would turn to a parent or carer if they were worried, and more are seeking help from school staff and youth workers than in previous years. This growing confidence in the adults around them is a testament to the community's commitment to supporting its youth.

While some challenges remain, particularly around mental health and bullying, young people have shared thoughtful suggestions for further improvements. Their suggestions - from better mental health support to more affordable activities and improved transport - will help guide the Council's work in the months ahead.

As always any questions or concerns on Council Services please contact me anytime.

Kind Regards

Mr Chris Read

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