

Report to Woolhampton Parish Council

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

Date: 16-03-2026

- Full Council – 26th March
- Executive Meeting – 19th March
- Public Meeting with Thames Water for Woolhampton: 27th March 10:00am at Woolhampton Village Hall (Provisional date to be confirmed by Thames Water)

Consultations

[Proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire](#)

End date: 2026-03-26 Results date: 2026-09-30

Oxfordshire County Council proposed one unitary council:

comprised of Oxfordshire: Cherwell, Oxford City, Oxfordshire County, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire

Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council proposed two unitary councils:

Oxford and Shires Council: comprised of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire

Ridgeway Council: comprised of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, plus West Berkshire (outside of invitation area)

Oxford City Council proposed three unitary councils: this includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils:

Greater Oxford Council: comprised of Oxford City (includes a boundary change)

Northern Oxfordshire Council: comprised of most of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire

Ridgeway Council: comprised of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and West Berkshire (outside of invitation area)

[Residents' Survey \(2026\) Consultation](#)

We'd like to hear what you think about the council, its services, and your local community.

End date: 2026-05-10

Green Issues

West Berkshire is reporting some of its best recycling results ever, following to move to three weekly black bin collections back in September 2025.

Our provisional recycling rate for 2025/26 stands at 55% - the highest our district has ever achieved.

And the progress doesn't stop there. Comparing the most recent reporting period with the same time last year shows just how much of a difference residents are making:

- Black bin waste has dropped by 1,049 tonnes. That's a huge 15% reduction. That means far less waste ending up in landfill or energy-from-waste facilities.
- Dry recycling is up by 199 tonnes (6%), showing that more materials are being sorted at home and given a new lease of life.
- Food waste recycling has surged by 22%, with 260 extra tonnes collected and transformed into soil conditioner instead of going landfill.
- Fly-tipping has not increased and has instead shown a small decrease.
- Financial performance is extremely positive. The service is expected to exceed its £150k savings target. While final figures are still being confirmed, savings for 2025/26 are estimated to be around £280k after implementation costs and expected to rise to approximately £488k in 2026/27.

Soil Conditioner Giveaway

West Berkshire Council and Veolia are once again teaming up to offer residents free, peat-free soil conditioner, with the popular giveaway returning for the eighth time this spring.

Residents can collect certified soil conditioner at Veolia's Waste Management Facility in Padworth (RG7 4JF) on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 March, 10:00am - 4:00pm. No booking is required.

Residents should bring proof of their West Berkshire residency and their own bags, boxes or containers, as the soil conditioner will be provided loose. Shovels will be available on site. To ensure fair access for all, residents are asked to take a reasonable amount.

The event is always busy, with peak times typically between 10:00 - 11:00am and 1:00 - 2:00pm. The soil conditioner is usually restocked around midday and 2:00pm, so there is no need to arrive early.

The PAS 100 (Publicly Available Specification 100) soil conditioner is produced at Veolia's In-Vessel Composting Facility in Padworth using food and garden waste collected from local households. Recycling food waste helps reduce what goes into black bins and supports more sustainable, closed-loop, waste management.

History Lovers

Bringing history to life at Shaw House

Four stunning exhibitions representing 400 years of history

A brand-new visitor experience at Shaw House in Newbury. The exciting new offer will include four stunning exhibitions within the beautiful rooms representing four hundred years of history: with a Tudor Oak Room, Queen Anne Drawing Room, Georgian Parlour and an Edwardian Bedroom.

Shaw House has stood on the north edge of Newbury since 1581. It has welcomed both Tudor and Stuart royalty, been the site of an English Civil War battle, survived both World Wars and schooled generations of local children. With the changes of ownership and use of the House over the centuries, the original contents were sold off in 1905 and 1945, leaving the rooms empty for more practical uses as a school and, more recently, as a conference and meetings venue.

From 1 April 2026, visitors can explore the newly dressed rooms and find out about the historical significance of the House. Each room will represent a different era of history with influences from the Tudor, Stuart, Georgian and Edwardian periods, along with interpretations of family life at Shaw House on display, helping visitors to step back in time and connect with our local heritage in fresh and engaging ways.

Visitors can also access the special exhibitions 'Dressed for Battle' displaying English Civil War arms and armour on loan from Littlecote House, and our 'Dressed for Shaw' display with replica costumes highlighting the changing fashions through time.

The garden will see further improvements to complement the Tudor Garden, which opened in March 2025. The next phase of the work will include a rose garden to replicate the gardens which were originally depicted in Country Life magazine in 1910, and further development of the Community Garden area. The house and garden improvements will be delivered with thanks to funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

A new accessible playground funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is also planned to be in place by summer 2026.

New entry fees will be introduced from Wednesday, 1 April, allowing visitors to take a self-guided tour of the exhibition rooms (£9 for adults and £6 for children) and concessions, with a special rate of £6 for West Berkshire residents. Entry to the gardens and playground area will remain free of charge for everyone, ensuring Shaw House continues to be a welcoming space for the whole community to enjoy. The café and gift shop are open to all visitors, including anyone using the gardens or playground.

Guided tours will also be available to book from £12 per person. For more information, please email shawhouse@westberks.gov.uk

Well-being

£110,000 Community Wellbeing Fund launched to boost mental health & physical activity initiatives in West Berkshire

We've joined forces with Greenham Trust to launch a funding pot to help local community and voluntary organisations support residents' mental health, wellbeing, and access to physical activity opportunities

West Berkshire Council and Greenham Trust have once again joined forces to launch the Community Wellbeing Fund, a £110,000 funding pot designed to help local community and voluntary organisations support residents' mental health, wellbeing, and access to physical activity opportunities across the district.

Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis, allowing organisations to apply at any time and receive funding soon after their application is approved.

The fund aims to empower not-for-profit groups to deliver meaningful, impactful projects that support people who may be:

- Experiencing mental health challenges
- Feeling socially isolated or lonely
- Looking to become more physically active
- Wanting to connect with others in their community

Funding can be used to expand existing services, introduce additional support, purchase essential equipment, or launch new initiatives that benefit residents. Priority will be given to projects based in areas of West Berkshire with the greatest need.

Applications to the Community Wellbeing Fund are now open. Submissions will be reviewed on a rolling basis by an expert panel. To find out more and apply, please visit [Community Wellbeing Fund - Greenham Trust](#)

Council Finances

West Berkshire Council has approved its budget for 2026/27, confirming how more than £210 million will be invested to support residents, improve local facilities, and protect the services people rely on every day.

With the budget now agreed by councillors, the focus turns to what residents will see and feel from April onwards as this year's spending plans begin to take effect.

A significant share of this year's funding will continue to strengthen care for vulnerable adults and children. This includes supporting residents with complex needs, helping more people live independently for longer, and ensuring children in care receive the stability and opportunities they deserve.

Initiatives such as the Low-Income Family Tracker will carry on identifying households who may be missing out on benefits, putting money back into residents' pockets. Care leavers will also benefit from continued Council Tax support to help them move confidently into adulthood.

Residents consistently tell us that road conditions matter to them. This year's budget includes major investment in resurfacing, drainage, street lighting and wider maintenance programmes. These

improvements will support smoother journeys, reduce pothole issues, and help ensure our network remains one of the best maintained in the South-East and nationally.

The budget expands the district's environmental work, including more electric vehicle charging points, and investment in greener travel options.

School improvements will continue across the district, including modernised facilities, improved learning environments and additional support for children with special educational needs. With 95% of local schools already rated Good or Outstanding, this year's investment aims to keep raising standards and expanding opportunities for every child.

A number of local projects will get underway this year, including an enhanced visitor experience at Shaw House and the repurposing of a former care home in Hungerford to create additional emergency accommodation. A new 3G pitch at Faraday Road in Newbury will also support local clubs and provide more opportunities for sport and active lifestyles.

On Monday (23 February) the Government agreed in principle to our request for a borrowing facility of up to £30 million for the 2026/27 financial year ahead. We're one of 35 councils across the country receiving this funding next year.

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

Kind Regards

Mr Chris Read

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