**Monthly Report to Parish Councils – June 2023**

**Fostering Opportunities**

West Berkshire is actively recruiting new foster carers for the rising number of children in their care. If you know of anyone who would make a great foster parent, please put them in touch with West Berks. This could be for children on a long term basis or even just a respite situation.

**Solar Power Opportunity**

West Berkshire Council and Solar Together Berkshire are working in partnership to help local homeowners turn sunlight into electricity by investing in to renewables through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage.

* Householders can register online to become part of the group for free and without obligation.
* Pre-approved UK solar PV suppliers participate in a reverse auction. They are able to offer competitive pricing as the volume and geographic concentration makes it possible for them to realise greater efficiencies, which they pass on with lower prices for installations.
* After the auction, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation specific to the details they submitted in their registration.
* If they choose to accept their recommendation, the specifics of their installation will be confirmed with a technical survey after which a date can be set for the installation of their solar PV system.
* Helpdesks are on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.
* The installation contract is between the householder and the relevant service provider. The promotion of this scheme is cost neutral to the Council.
* It is free to register and there is no obligation to go ahead with an installation

# Veolia Orchard

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| Veolia have an offer available for local schools to help them deliver ecological transformation by applying for a Veolia Orchard.  A Veolia Orchard is made up of five young fruit trees or, for those schools with more limited space, ten strawberry plants, which can thrive in pots and bring nature and biodiversity to playgrounds, big or small.  All schools in West Berkshire (nursery to college) can apply online from now up until Monday 24 July. Successful applicants will be informed in September with deliveries taking place during October and November. The trees and plants will be accompanied by an information pack on how to plant and how to harvest the fruit, making this a unique learning opportunity for pupils. |

# Football at Faraday Road

Work is continuing to restore the Faraday Road football pitch as we get ready for the new season in September. The team have been busy mowing the grass, and the next step is applying a suitable selective herbicide to remove some of the broadleaved weeds from the grass.

**Local Plan Review 2022-2039 - Planning Inspectorate Agrees to Extension of Time**

On 20 June 2023, West Berkshire Council wrote to the Planning Inspector requesting additional time to respond to Preliminary Questions about the Local Plan Review, that the Inspector had asked the Council to consider. The Inspector agreed to this request on 23 June and also agreed that the Examination in Public should be rescheduled for early 2024.

This request for extra time to respond to these questions is to allow for all new Members of Council to gain a full understanding of the Local Plan Review, including the Inspectors questions and the proposed Officer responses

Councillor Tony Vickers, Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement said:

“I am grateful to the Planning Inspector for agreeing to our request for more time to consider our responses to his preliminary questions.

We have many new members that need to be brought up to speed on the Local Plan Review, which will guide development in our District for the next fifteen years.

This is something that should not be rushed”.

**Newbury Lido**

The refurbishment of the Lido at Northcroft is progressing well and things are looking great. The splash pad is being installed and the pool lining is coming along nicely too. We are now preparing to install the slides and lay the decking which will be in the up and coming weeks.

**New Leisure Centre Contract**

From 1 July, Everyone Active will begin a ten year contract to run Northcroft Leisure Centre and Lido, Hungerford Leisure Centre, Kennet Leisure Centre, Cotswold Sports Centre, Willink Leisure Centre, Lambourn Sports Centre and the Downland Sports Centre.

The new contract will have a strong focus on community outreach, providing a variety of creative and physical activities in local venues such as community halls, churches, and outdoor locations to make sure that everyone can access the activities they love.

On a personal level, I have been attending meetings covering Budgets, Operations Board, and Executive, as well as working with officers on education and child care matters. I attended the recent Western Area Planning meeting. My training as a councillor has continued.

I’ve also been out and about meeting various people who have requested help, and managed to attend 3 out of the 4 parish council meetings. I’ve also been dealing with road closures, overgrown hedges and pot holes!

Heather Codling

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