

WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORT April/May 2018
ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

1. There has been unprecedented reductions in the Council's funding from Central Government as part of the Government's austerity policy. Over the previous 8 years The Council has had to find over £55m of revenue savings. At Full Council meeting on 1st March a Council Tax increase of 2.99% with a 3% Adult Social Service precept was approved this will raise £2.7m and a further £2.7m. To achieve the balanced budget for 2018/19 £5.2m of savings and income generation were approved. The £125m revenue budget is funded 75% from council tax, 18% from retained business rates and 7% from government grants. The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) has been reduced by £24m since 2013/4 and we will receive only £120,000 in 2018/9. The 2016/7 Local Government Settlement announced that Local government would retain 100% of business rates by 2020 (now revised to 75%). The six Unitary Authorities in Berkshire submitted a bid along with 9 other groups to be a pilot for developing the funding proposals. It estimated £35m will be retained in Berkshire during the pilot year. For West Berkshire of the £86m 2018/9 we raised we expect to retain £22m. In 2017/8 we collected £85m and retained £19m.
2. The Council has consulted and the Local Government Boundary Commission has issued final recommendations, the Council has approved. That from the 2019 election West Berkshire Council will be represented by 43 councillors a reduction of 9 and will have 24 wards 6 fewer than now. The electorate in 2017 was 121,480 and forecast to be 130,217 in 2023 giving an average number of electors per Councillor 2,825 and 3,028. Several wards have had Parish councils added and removed as a result of the recommendations. The Bucklebury ward will be changed currently 5 parishes, Bradfield, Bucklebury, Frilsham, Hermitage, Stanford Dingley represented by 2 Councillors. It will be split and divided into. 'Bradfield' Ward 1 Cnclr.- Parishes of Bradfield, Englefield, Sulhampstead and Ufton Nervet. 'Bucklebury' Ward 1 Cnclr. - Parishes of Bucklebury, Stanford Dingley, Midgham, Woolhampton. 'Chieveley and Cold Ash' Ward 2 Cnclr. - Parishes of Chieveley, Cold Ash, Hermitage, and Winterbourne. Ridgeway Ward 1 Cnclr.- Compton, East Ilsley, West Ilsley, Hampstead Norreys, Yattendon, Frilsham.
3. The West Berkshire Council Strategy 2015-2019 has been refreshed in March 2018, despite the high demand for services the Council has some notable successes.
 - A) Better safeguarding for children and young people, rated good by Ofsted in 2017.
 - B) Supporting our schools to improve: more than 95% are now assessed as good or outstanding.
 - C) Investing in the districts roads.
 - D) Completing 62 flood alleviation schemes.Full information can be found on the Council Web site www.westberks.gov.uk
4. The Volunteer Centre and West Berkshire Council held an event at Newbury Racecourse that was supported by over 86 organizations giving Networking, volunteering and services available opportunities.
5. The Council's Highway Service is addressing the road damage, due to the inclement winter weather and high groundwater levels caused by heavy rainfall. This has taken a considerable toll on the roads many damaged and need surface treatment. Highway engineers are doing what they can to create faster and long lasting repairs on this and other damaged sections. The Council had allocated £4.8Million in 2016/17 for road improvements on the 750 miles of road in West Berkshire and £5.2m for 2017/18, a further £4M (£0.7m from Govt.) will be required to repair the road damage.