

26th February 2021



Chief Executive

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Good afternoon,

With the Government's [Covid-19 Response Roadmap](#) announced earlier this week and the nation-wide vaccination programme well underway, it's a relief to be seeing an end in sight for the pandemic. To bring our district back to a full operating rhythm post-Covid, we are increasing our emphasis on Recovery through both our reshaped Recovery Strategy and Council Strategy Refresh.

While there is great cause for optimism about the future, as we pen our 50th edition of these Weeknotes, we sombrely acknowledge the painful toll of the pandemic on everyone's lives and the tragic losses over the past year. We give our continued heartfelt thanks to the NHS, residents, volunteers, businesses, police and other partners, and our staff for all of the tremendous efforts to support our community throughout this incredibly difficult time.

There are still tough months ahead, so our Covid-19 Response efforts also continue at a strong pace. This includes administering further Covid business grants announced by the government for businesses required to close due to national lockdowns. We are finalising the details to share with those eligible businesses as a matter of urgency.

We know that the repercussions of the pandemic will be felt far and wide, particularly upon mental health and wellbeing. Together with Greenham Trust we have launched a joint £200,000 "Surviving to Thriving" mental health fund. This will provide grants to help community groups carry out projects to support people who have been impacted by Covid-19. The application process is now open and can be found on The Good Exchange page [Start Your Registration](#).

We will be presenting a further update on our Covid response activity at our next public Local Outbreak Engagement Board meeting on Monday, 1 March at 6pm. The event will be streamed live on YouTube [here](#) and will available on the same link for later viewing.

In addition, Lynne and our Head of Public Health, Matt Pearce, will be holding a public Facebook Live session on Thursday, 4 March at 5pm to answer questions on our ongoing response to Covid and the easing of lockdown restrictions. Tune into our [Facebook page](#) to watch and take part.

Our broader spending and investment plans for the Council from the 2021/22 to 2023/24 financial years will be presented at our upcoming annual Budget meeting on Tuesday, 2 March at 6.30pm. The meeting can be viewed live on YouTube, or after the event, via the following link: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/fullcouncillive>.

Meanwhile, in support of the Covid-19 Roadmap's Step 1 phase, as announced on Monday, we are working hard with our schools to ensure that appropriate measures and testing facilities are in place for when schools re-open on March 8th. Please note that England's stay-at-home order will remain until at least 29 March, which the Government is currently reminding the public about through a national advertising campaign.

Our four [community testing sites](#) are continuing to provide Covid-19 tests to key and critical workers who don't have coronavirus symptoms to help stop any possible virus transmissions. On our Twitter feed @WestBerks we posted a video showing the straightforward process of getting tested at our Highwood Copse Primary School testing site.

As of yesterday, 39,705 West Berkshire residents have received their first Covid-19 vaccination in the NHS-led programme. The NHS is now publishing weekly updates about vaccination numbers at the local authority level on their [new vaccination data webpage](#). Click on the most current document in the "Weekly Data" section and view the "Vaccinations by LTLA" tab to see the West Berkshire data.

We will continue to provide updates that we receive from NHS Berkshire West on our dedicated [vaccinations page](#). There we feature news about the recently opened mass vaccination centre at Reading's Madejski Stadium, which is being run by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Eligible individuals can book a vaccine appointment at this site or another place near them at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>. At this stage, people who can book an appointment include those who are:

- aged 64 or over
- have previously received a letter saying they are at high risk from coronavirus (clinically extremely vulnerable)
- an eligible frontline health worker
- an eligible frontline social care worker
- eligible for Carer's Allowance – find out more about Carer's Allowance on GOV.UK

In other news, to help improve cycling and walking opportunities for adults and children, we are inviting the community to collaborate with us on designing Active Travel schemes for West Berkshire. These schemes are intended to enhance safety, the environment, air quality and sustainability, as well as play a key role in the district's Covid Recovery. As many of us are enjoying the benefits of the great outdoors more than ever, now is the opportune time to get involved with this community planning. To learn more about the schemes and take part, please visit the [Active Travel engagement platform](#).

Yours sincerely,



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