

26th June 2020



Chief Executive

West Berkshire Council
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Good afternoon,

Over the past few days the local news has been dominated by the tragic events in Reading. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of those people who have been killed, and with our colleagues at Reading Borough Council during this difficult time. On Monday, West Berkshire Council joined in a minute's silence for those who have been affected by the tragedy.

Reading Borough Council have created a new #ReadingTogether microsite to provide information about events, memorials, condolences, information and victim support. You can find it at <http://together.reading.gov.uk/>

Across the Council this week we have been continuing to balance the dual-needs of the recovery from Covid-19 and the need to continue delivering the usual day-to-day business. This week our Corporate Parent Panel met to review how teams within the Children and Family Service have been offering support to our children in care – the importance of which cannot be overstated. Elsewhere in the service, some of our young carers featured on a Channel 4 News report on the impact Covid-19 has had on them. It was powerful to hear in their own voices the challenges they have faced and a reminder of the good work which is being done throughout the year to help children in the district caring for relatives.

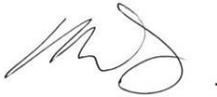
Elsewhere, we are putting the finishing touches to our Environment Strategy, which goes before Executive next month, we are preparing to launch a new climate change bond, working to make our new ChatBot even smarter...across the Council we're busy both doing the 'day job' and helping the district recover from a difficult few months.

That said, we have to recognise that Covid-19 has had an impact on what we do, and will continue to do so for some time to come. We are looking at our future plans and working through how we may need to adapt them. Our Economic Development Strategy is a good example; our local economy has been affected by the need for social distancing and we will need to look at how we might need to flex in order to respond to the situation we find ourselves in. We're fortunate to have a strong and resilient local economy and this leaves us in a better position than others to bounce back.

Another focus for us this week has been developing the Local Outbreak Plan. The response to Covid-19 is changing with a more locally-focused approach and, like all local authorities, we're developing our plans in case there is an outbreak here in West Berkshire. We'll be telling you more about the plan next week, and we will then be moving to fortnightly updates through the longer-term recovery phase.

Finally, we have been working with schools to make arrangements for the wider re-opening for pupils. To support them in planning for the remainder of this term, the summer holidays or September we are looking for overflow spaces we might use. This could be village or church halls or other venues near to the schools. They may not be needed, but our Education team are assessing what's available. If you know of a space which might be used, or of marquee and portaloo providers, please let the team know at educationassets@westberks.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



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