

***Strategy, Resources and Finance***

1. We will minimise any Council Tax rises in the future whilst delivering excellent services.
2. We will keep cracking down on Council Tax Fraud so that everyone pays their fair share.
3. We pledge to balance the budget over the next four years.
4. Making a difference is what matters. The role of the Council Officers (staff) is to make that difference. We hold the officers accountable for the improvements they bring to residents lives. It's important that we invest in leadership development and work to upskill all council staff. Over time, that upskilling will be demonstrated by raising low pay thresholds and tying that to increased staff accountability and rewards for performance.
5. Our Digital by Choice programme has proved effective. Our new web site has proved popular and we will continue to develop it.
6. The devolutionary agenda will be embraced by working closer with neighbouring authorities; thereby increasing efficiencies and increasing the pool of skills. We will become even more of a commissioning Council: commissioning outside parties and partners where appropriate brings increased expertise and accountability to the Council.
7. Finally, your council is changing; we will ask the Boundary Commission for a ward level review to redraw the ward boundaries and review the number of Councillors.

***District and Community Planning – The future of the District***

8. In the next four years, at least £110 million will be invested in West Berkshire by your Council and our partners.
9. SFB programme will continue through 2015 bringing upgraded Broadband to 16,000 homes.
10. Superfast Extension Programme. We pledge to invest £3.734m in Rural Broadband and bring Superfast Broadband to at least 95% of West Berkshire premises and improved broadband to all by the end of 2017.
11. We pledge to regenerate the London Road Industrial Estate - a major gateway into Newbury that includes a new access road from the A339. We will attract new and existing employers as well as residential housing to this regenerated area of Newbury.
12. We will commission plans to renew the Market Street area of Newbury for homes, car parking and a new setting for the Railway and Bus Stations.
13. We have begun work to create a new link road into the Sterling Cables area which will allow the area to be redeveloped and renewed.
14. We will work with Thatcham Town Council to renew Thatcham Town Centre.
15. With the help of Greenham Common Trust, we will develop plans to renew the Wharf and Waterside Building in Newbury. As part of the Wharf development, we will also review the working of the Parkway Bridge.

16. With our partners, we will continue to seek out other renewal projects across the District.
17. We shall work with the Newbury Business Improvement District as they continue to develop Newbury's business offering.
18. We are determined to improve Skills Development amongst our young people in low skilled employment to better their long term career opportunities.
19. Our involvement with the LEP includes high level engagement at Shareholder level and with Executive Board members. We pledge to keep this level of involvement with the business community. We shall give our full support to the key LEP Project to create direct access to Heathrow Airport. We shall also support the additional runway at Heathrow and the new Crossrail link from Reading.
20. Unlike many parts of the country we have a very low level of youth unemployment. We actively encourage local employers to hire apprentices and to assist their young employees to improve their skills. To support these efforts we pledge to continue hiring our own apprentices within the Council. We have set a target of 18 apprenticeships each year, with at least one in the "people care area" and at least one other with a disability.
21. By keeping West Berkshire as a prosperous and business friendly district, we will attract further employers and services to West Berkshire. A new IKEA store in the East of the district will be opening soon. This will create many new jobs as well as bringing a worldwide successful retailer to the area. We welcome IKEA.
22. We also have great start-up and small and medium size companies in West Berkshire and we pledge to work with the Newbury Business Improvement District (BID) and the LEP as we believe they are fundamentally important to our economic future.
23. We pledge to support and encourage the growth of small businesses in rural areas by working with partners to promote farm diversification, community enterprises and new start-ups.
24. We pledge to strive to make West Berkshire a great place to start a new business. We pledge to make West Berkshire a great place to nurture and grow a business.
25. The building of 1,000 homes at Sandford will soon start.
26. Taceham House in Thatcham has been plagued by delays but it is our intention that it will be replaced by an affordable homes development.
27. Our strong planning policies will protect the AONB. There is, though, a need for housing in the countryside, and we pledge to ensure this is carried out in an appropriate way. In particular, we will encourage the provision of affordable housing in rural locations for local people.
28. We will continue to support farm diversification in our planning policies and we will encourage the use of derelict farm buildings for residential housing use.
29. We will discourage planning applications for large wind turbines in the AONB.

30. We have successfully consulted on the preferred sites for future housing developments. We shall proceed to final consultation in late 2015. Thereafter we shall submit the plan to the Planning Inspectorate and this should prevent development on inappropriate sites.
31. We will encourage the change of use for offices over shops to residential use
32. We will tackle the challenge of reduced developer contributions to infrastructure needs (CIL).
33. The quality and effectiveness of planning decisions are greatly enhanced by structured consultations with affected neighbours, parishes, and other interested parties. We will seek to ensure that the planning process provides for such consultation.
34. We will develop our Local Help to Buy Scheme known as First Step, Next Step and increase its funding by at least £500,000.
35. We will target building 1,000 affordable homes in the 2015-2020 period so that people can have the homes to rent socially and, through shared ownership, to get a foot on the housing ladder.
36. We will implement a Private Landlords Accreditation Scheme and continue to foster best practice in the private rental sector.
37. We pledge to keep a balanced housing mix so that a range of housing options is available to our residents.
38. As Central Governments welfare reforms are implemented we have used Discretionary Housing Payments to provide transitional help for those in need. We know that this transition can often be difficult and we will continue to provide both financial and practical support.

***Doing what we must do – and doing it well***

39. Over the next four years, we will resurface at least 145 miles of roads and give higher priority to estate and unclassified roads.
40. We will continue to focus on reducing congestion.
41. We will continue to work with the cycling groups to improve the cycle network.
42. We will keep car parking charges competitive with neighbouring Councils.
43. We will continue to ensure that residents in rural areas are able to access service centres and facilities.
44. The next four years will see further Flood Alleviation Schemes in Tull Way and Dunstan Park in Thatcham and in Great Shefford.
45. We will work with Thatcham Flood Forum and the Environment Agency to create the Thatcham South East Flood Alleviation Scheme.

46. In Purley, we will carry out surveys for Property Level Protection with the Environment Agency.
47. We are and will remain an active partner in the management of this unique chalk down land. We approved a new management plan (2014-18) to support initiatives including Tourism, Biodiversity and Conservation. We have actively supported the AONB Leader Programme, which has grant funded many West Berkshire local enterprises and community projects. This has helped to improve the rural economy and quality of life for people living and working in our AONB. We will continue to support the AONB Leader Programme which promotes the protection and use of the AONB for all our enjoyment.
48. Living in West Berkshire is enormously enhanced by our countryside, country parks and green spaces. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure these are all protected for future generations.
49. West Berkshire has over 700 miles of public rights of way. We know how important these routes are to our residents and visitors. We will protect them. An ongoing and regular maintenance programme continues.
50. We will maintain our rubbish collection programme and, by 2020, we will recycle, recover, reuse or compost 90% of our waste.
51. We will convert all the street lights to LED in the next four years.
52. The number of electric car charging points at Car Parks will be increased during the next four years in line with demand.
53. We will introduce a collective energy supplier switching service for consumers to help consumers find the best deals available.
54. The district-wide leisure centres are well used by both residents and our schools. These excellent facilities play a vital part in the health and wellbeing of residents.
55. We are looking at ways of further enhancing how we use our libraries, so they become the 'front door' of the council, and a real focus and 'hub' of community life. We will encourage local communities to put forward initiatives for using our libraries. We will also open a library kiosk in our Calcot Office with a 'click and collect' service.
56. Our Safer Communities Partnership will work with Thames Valley Police and other agencies to keep crime levels falling. There has been a significant reduction in the number of burglary from dwellings to the lowest level recorded since 1999. Many crimes involve domestic abuse: victims of domestic abuse are coming forward and reporting crime and the Safer Communities Partnership is determined to reduce the number of people who are the victims of domestic abuse. Anti-Social Behaviour is also falling and will be a priority of the Safer Communities Partnership.
57. We shall continue to support, work with and value our volunteers.
58. The Neighbourhood Wardens Service does an excellent job keeping communities clean and safe. We will continue to fund it.

59. Our Local Community Bid Scheme that provides funds for small local projects through your Councillors will continue.
60. We will foster and work with Parishes to produce up-to-date Parish plans.
61. We will encourage local communities to support the armed forces community in their area.

### **Education**

62. We will continue to care about the education of pupils in those schools who wish to move to Academy status by providing appropriate support and services.
63. Our School Improvement Team will continue to support our School Senior Leadership teams in order to improve the leadership given by education professionals and governing bodies. We shall continue to support our School Improvement Team to continue to provide the necessary courses and mentoring to help schools to maintain the improvement in school attainment for all pupils.
64. We pledge that all primary schools KS2 SATS results will show at least 75% of pupils achieving level 4 and above in all subjects.
65. Our expectation is that, by 2020, all schools in the district including academies will be rated good or outstanding by Ofsted – most importantly that all achieve well in Leadership and Management and in Teaching and Learning.
66. Our expectation is that, by 2020, all schools will be in the top quartile of achievement for GCSE A\* - C in 5 subjects including English and Maths and that overall local authority schools will be in the Top 10% in the country for this achievement.
67. We will develop a Hungerford Education Plan in conjunction with the local partners. In the first instance, we will provide additional places for primary age children and continue to support John O’Gaunt School to become the school of choice for all pupils.
68. For those schools which are working with temporary kitchen accommodation we shall be providing additional, or new, kitchen space.
69. We are currently working with partners in order to provide a new primary school in South Newbury and will continue with the programme of extensions to other schools, such as John Rankin Junior School and The Willows School, to provide additional places in the Newbury area.
70. We also have a number of capital projects to improve accommodation in some of our schools, these projects include Lambourn Primary School and Kennet Valley Primary School.
71. We shall be providing two new units for pupils with autism – one for secondary school pupils and one for primary phase.
72. We shall continue to invest in our School Improvement Team in order to ensure that we continue to narrow the educational gap for our vulnerable children.
73. We shall continue to provide Children’s Centres across the district.

74. We have a strong record of success with NEETS (young adults Not in Employment, Education or Training). We have the second lowest NEETS rate in the South East. Using the Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) City Deal programme, we will continue to ensure that all our young people have as many opportunities as possible.
75. We will create a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Block at Newbury College.
76. We shall continue to provide a comprehensive Adult Education Programme working in conjunction with other partners including Newbury College.

### **Our Children**

77. Together with major stakeholders we will create a new building for the use of all young people at Waterside whilst replacing the youth support activities in another building in central Newbury
78. We shall continue to improve all aspects of care for our vulnerable children and young people through constant reappraisal of our Social Work team and how we can support them in the vital work they do with parents and children.
79. We have been extremely successful with our Troubled Families Programme and will continue to build on the improvements already seen.
80. It is our intention that we will be deemed to be "Good" or "Outstanding" at Safeguarding (OFSTED definition) by 2020.
81. Front line Children Services have been protected and we shall continue to do so. Hard to reach vulnerable children and young people will be prioritised and protected.
82. We shall strengthen our team of Foster Carers – this will ensure that as many Children Looked After as possible, including those with complex needs, will be able to stay in West Berkshire.
83. We shall continue to work to make West Berkshire Council the place where Social Workers choose to work and continue to work by giving them the most supportive conditions possible. Our Brilliant West Berkshire project will refocus our involvement on prevention across the whole spectrum of Children and Adult Services.
84. The recruitment and retention package we have put in place in Children's Services will lower dependency on agency staff.
85. Better early intervention practices will result in a lowering in the number of Looked After Children for whom we care.
86. We are working to ensure that families who have children with Special Education Needs have access to Personal Budgets.
87. We shall continue to support our Looked After Children to obtain the best possible outcomes from their education including encouraging and supporting those who wish to participate in Further Education.

88. We shall continue to support our very successful fostering and adoption services to remain in the top quartile nationally.
89. We shall introduce a fully shared adoption service with other Berkshire authorities.
90. We will do our best to keep our young people safe from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

***Health and Adult Social Care***

91. The proportion of people over the age of 65 in West Berkshire continues to increase as it does in the UK population as a whole so the importance of prevention and integrating health and social care services will be paramount.
92. We will ensure that the new substance misuse treatment and advice contract delivers for our residents.
93. We will develop and fund a network of Dementia Friends across the district.
94. The HWB has commissioned a new sexual health treatment and advice contract – we shall monitor its performance carefully.
95. We will ensure more people are aware of and take up the offer of personal Health Screening helping early detection of long-term conditions.
96. We will introduce Health Champions – Healthy Living Pharmacies.
97. We shall continue to target services for carers as a priority e.g. health checks, flu vaccinations, gym and swim sessions for young carers.
98. Working with Dental Public Health we will target resources on the difficult to reach parts of the district. For children, we shall ensure the brushing for life scheme for under 5's is offered in all our children centres
99. We will develop a Mental Health Strategy for the district as we know that one in four adults in the UK will experience a diagnosable mental health problem.
100. We will work to reduce health damaging behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and substance abuse.
101. We will improve the health and educational outcomes of looked after children through prevention and integrated health and social care support and services.
102. We will continue to promote the Walking for Health scheme in our Country Parks and on our Public Rights of Way.
103. We will continue to improve our cycleway infrastructure and also bicycle security by introducing new cycle racks across the district.
104. We will ensure health visitors deliver for West Berkshire communities when they are transferred to the Council in October 2015.

105. April 2015, sees the introduction of the Care Act. We will keep West Berkshire residents and carers informed about, and engaged in, the Care Act changes and how they affect us all.
106. We will create an Extra Care Scheme in the East of the District and we will create a supported living unit in Newbury. Between them they will cater for at least 63 more families.
107. We will continue to encourage and support personal budgets for adults with social care needs because they allow the adult to make the choices that are right for them, decide how and when they want their care and choose how the money will be best spent for them.
108. The Council's Adult Social Care service is regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and we shall work to ensure that our services are classified as outstanding or good at each CQC inspection.