

## **District Council Report**

**February 7<sup>th</sup> 2021**

### **Council Tax**

West Berkshire Council is proposing to increase council tax by 1.99% for 2021/22, the maximum allowed. However, it is not making an “Adult Social Care Precept” which would have allowed it to raise council tax by a further 3%. That precept could be spread over two years, so the council could still raise it next year.

### **Food Waste Collection**

The council’s draft budget includes £900,000 capital investment for weekly food waste collection. Collection would be weekly. The collection will probably start in early 2022.

### **Covid Marshalls**

The council are going to employ eight Covid marshals for at least six months. They will engage with the public and businesses about any concerns they may have, hand out face masks when necessary and aim to ensure there’s no inadvertent rule-breaking.

The officers will also support local businesses; ensuring they are avoiding bottle-necks by operating effective one-way systems.

They will not, however, have any enforcement powers – instead working with public protection staff and Thames Valley Police, who will pick up situations where legal enforcement is needed.

### **Draft Emerging Local Plan**

I submitted my comments on the plan on Thursday. The hard copy of my responses ran to 15 pages. I encountered several problems with the consultation portal, so I hope that didn’t put other residents off. I commented on many of the proposals and policies in the plan, however in summary I wanted the proposals for another 170 new homes and new offices on land between Theale and the M4 rejected for the following reasons:

- the impact on traffic and services on top of that from the over 440 homes on the western edge of Theale that already have planning permission
- they would cause Theale to be merged with Calcot
- the new housing would be on land blighted by flood risk, contaminated land, noise and pollution from the M4 and overhead power lines. The proposed new offices were unlikely to be needed because there were already many empty offices in Theale and business parks near M4 Junction 12, and because more people would be likely to work from home after the Covid-19 pandemic

I also pointed out that Theale would also be badly affected by traffic from the 2,500 new homes proposed for Thatcham.