

How we can influence politicians

A presentation by Councillor Carolyne Culver to the
West Berkshire Green Exchange and Hungerford
Environmental Action Team joint forum

Wednesday 24 September 2025

Contact Carolyne with any comments/questions:

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How can residents influence politicians?

Parish and town councils

- Hungerford Town Council
- Kintbury Parish Council

District, county and unitary councils

- West Berkshire Council 'unitary' offers all services
- Oxfordshire and Hampshire are 'two-tier' with a district or city council and a county council
- The government want all areas to 'unitarise'

Members of Parliament

- Lee Dillon MP - Newbury (Liberal Democrat)
- Olivia Bailey MP - Reading West and Mid Berkshire (Labour)
- Kit Malthouse - North West Hampshire (Conservative)
- Danny Kruger - East Wiltshire (Reform)

Parish and town councils

Parish and town councillors are elected or co-opted

Unpaid volunteers

Not overtly party political

A precept is added to your council tax bill for services

Manage recreation grounds, allotments, orchards, (some) bins,
(some) lamp posts





Hampstead Norreys Parish Council

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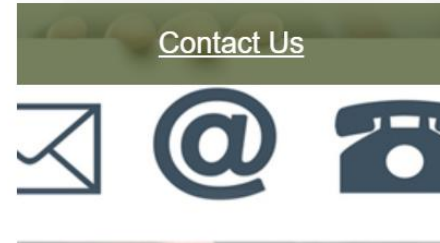
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Attend meetings to ask questions, ask for an agenda item

Contact councillors or clerk directly - their individual responsibilities should be on their website

Volunteer to be a parish councillor!

West Berkshire Council

Councillors are elected every four years - you will have 1, 2 or 3!

<https://westberks.gov.uk/councillors>

Children's Services, Adult Social Care, 'Place' - highways, planning, countryside, leisure, libraries and....

... environment: waste and recycling, green spaces, public rights of way, Local Planning Authority, Lead Local Flood Authority (responsible for ground water and surface water)

Target for the council (not the whole district) to be net zero by 2030

Ridgeway Council - WBC, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire

Environment and climate change

Portfolio holder covering the environment

Environment Advisory Group was replaced by Policy Development Group

Parish Climate Forum

Strategies and delivery plans



How can residents influence WBC councillors?

Direct contact – email, call, surgery, town hall steps

Public questions at Council and Executive meetings

Public consultations

Public petitions

Motions (you need a councillor to sponsor this)

Protests

Media – print, broadcast, new media, social

Title	◆ Respondents ◆
Improve and extend sound protection measures along the Theale Bypass	66
prohibit the culling of badgers on council-owned land	169
More plastics & packaging in recycling	10
West Berkshire to be Zero Carbon by 2030	134
Make Beenham's A4 junction safer	292
Plastic waste in West Berkshire	2356
Electric charging stations	0
Save the planters at The Old Chapel, West Ilsley	260
Schools opening	0
Cold Ash Hill Planning Application	0
Expand Recycling Service	3
Sewage discharge by Water companies	278
New Road Hill / A4 development proposal Objection Petition	60
Windmill Court Residents Eviction Proposal	393
Make Hedgehog Highways a Planning Condition	396
Save the Readibus	1208

Public petitions

Creating a petition

- Google search the URL – it isn't obvious!
- Create a petition online
- Collect signatures on paper - template online
- petitions@westberks.gov.uk

Petitions need a clear purpose, the name and contact details of the petition organiser, and at least 50 signatories

Submitting a Petition

- Submit online, by email, or paper
- Present the petition yourself to Executive or via a councillor at Full Council
- Speak for five minutes



Public questions

www.westberks.gov.uk/meeting-question

Anyone living, working or studying in West Berkshire can ask a question at Executive, Council and Health and Wellbeing Board

Portfolio holder will respond

Supplementary question

30 minutes for public questions at the start of each meeting

Members' questions too



Consultation and Engagement Hub



Have your say in West Berkshire

Category ▾

Ward ▾

Open Closed Results Archived

Enter your keyword(s):

Search...



There are 29 results

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Longfield Primary School - School Streets Scheme

Open - 274 days left

What is a School Streets Scheme? It is a temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times in term time only, on streets outside a...

Start date: 2025-03-14

End date: 2025-12-31

Results published: 2026-06-30

Scrutiny committees

Independent of the Executive (ie cabinet), challenges the council leadership and holds them to account, 'critical friend'

Resources and Place – chaired by Cllr Carlyne Culver

Children and Young People – chaired by Cllr Dominic Boeck

Health and Adult Social Care – chaired by Cllr Martha Vickers

Environment and climate change



Protest at West Berkshire Council in 2019 when a public petition was submitted, calling for the declaration of a climate emergency

Protests about council policies



How do I engage with my own councillors?

Call or email. Be prepared! Focus on key points, follow up in writing.

Try not to have preconceived ideas of what they might be like

Don't be afraid of them – they are there to help and represent you, and you might know more about the topic than they do!

Ask them for information, lobby them about an issue, sign posting

Be mindful of their committee memberships or special interests

Invite them to meet or visit a relevant area/group

Offer to help them: provide briefing material or point to sources of information

Don't forget the different tiers of government and their responsibilities

Think tactically

What are the party policies on the issues you care about?

What have councillors said in the media, in their newsletters, online?

Are your councillors in 'safe' or 'marginal' seats?

If you have more than one councillor, who are the most likely allies? If one is not interested it doesn't mean the others won't be.

What is the political balance of power on the council?

Work with your councillors to secure better planning conditions

If your councillors are not experts, they might be happy for your help!

Influencing your MPs

<https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

Includes contact details, voting record, spoken contributions

An alternative is <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/>

MPs have office staff who reply to their emails and letters

Letter writing and email campaigns - personalise your correspondence!

MPs usually have a surgery on a Friday or weekend

Look at their voting record. Have they signed Early Day Motions?

Do they have a government role? Are they on a Select Committee?

Lobbies of Parliament

Committees

Committees consider policy issues, scrutinise government work, expenditure, and examine proposals for primary and secondary legislation.

[Find out more about committees](#)



Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Commons Select Committee

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRA) scrutinises the work of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It looks at issues from farming to the water sector to a circular economy. View the full list of [the committee's strategic priorities](#).

You can follow the Committee on X (formerly Twitter) [@CommonsEFRA](#)

[Find out more about this committee](#)

Climate and weather resilience >

Written evidence:  Accepting
Deadline 10 October 2025

Opened 9 September 2025

Preventing waste and enabling a circular economy >

Opened 20 May 2025

Fisheries and the marine environment

Opened 23 January 2025