

Borough Council Report for Highclere Parish Assembly 2020/21

The year has been defined by the pandemic and the total reliance on Zoom and Teams as there has been no physical Council or Committee meetings held in Basingstoke or in any of the parishes.

Bin collections reverted to normal after a period of going from weekly to fortnightly collections and remarkably the service held up well even though on occasion there was only one operative due to staff shortages again because of the pandemic.

The Household Waste Recycling issue was resolved by Basingstoke and Deane BC and Hants CC jointly funding the cost of using West Berks facilities. Basingstoke has allocated the funds to continue with this until a longer term solution is found by Hants CC.

Planning has been hampered by staff turnover at Basingstoke and many applications have been delayed. That situation has been addressed. The application for 26 dwellings at Westridge is still being evaluated by Officers and a decision is expected in the summer.

The Local Plan has a rolling annual evaluation and one of the major activities is the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Assessment which defines possible areas of development for Basingstoke to achieve government targets on building. Landowners and developers are able to put forward possible sites but this does not mean that they would get planning permission. It is needed for Basingstoke to identify a "Five Year Land Supply". Without that the ability of Basingstoke to control its housing development is compromised. The next issue of the Local Plan is in 2024.

Significant progress has been made in the Green and Environmental Strategy to address climate change. Plans have been made to reduce council buildings to zero carbon and implementation has started. Other key areas are transport, council owned land and parks and public awareness.

As from 6 May Highclere will become part of the Ward of Evingar. Basingstoke has been reorganised by the Boundary Commission into 18 Wards each with three councillors so 6 councillor positions have gone. Evingar is the Saxon name for this area and it will comprise the former Burghclere Highclere and St Mary Bourne, East Woodhay and Hurstbourne Priors. Only Whitchurch is missing from the original Evingar of Saxon times.