

Account of Purley on Thames

Tales of West Berkshire - 2017

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September

I have been visiting some of our staff groups in different locations recently, seeing their work and where they are located. It occurred to me that probably, not many people know exactly what services WBC provides, especially those in social care, and where they operate from and can be accessed.

I think I have mentioned before that the Council is organised into three so-called 'directorates', those being

Communities - the people-centred services,

Environment - fairly obviously, those services oriented towards our living and working environment, and

Resources - the internal workings of the Council - finance, legal, HR, etc.

I would like to use the next few PPN columns to describe in more detail these various services, and how/where they operate, and hopefully provide you with useful information. I'll start if I may with my own portfolio, Adult Social Care.

We employ Social Workers and Occupational Therapists to act as our 'front door' for people who become in need of support. These staff assess and advise our 'clients' and arrange various types of care support if needed.

Looking at the capabilities of family and community first, and if needed, home care or residential / nursing care. We can be alerted to a new situation directly from the person affected or their family, from one of the hospitals in or bordering our area, from emergency services or care workers where a care need is changing.

These staff are deployed in three localities in the East, Central and West of the district. In the East, the team is in Calcot, at Turnham's Green office. The East is defined as the Wards of Purley, Tilehurst, Pangbourne, Calcot, Burghfield and Sulhamstead, etc. We also have staff operating in the Royal Berks hospital, a specialist Mental Health team co-located with the Community Hospital at Thatcham, and Resource (Day) Centres in the three localities as well. Again, the east centre — Greenfield House - is next to the Tilehurst Parish Office in Calcot.

The Council operates four residential care homes directly, and commissions places in many other commercial care homes for our residents. We also have various supported living accommodation facilities (not enough!) and manage a Shared Lives scheme — effectively, fostering for looked-after adults.

The social care services are tailored to several different sets of Clients. Many help the elderly and frail, some are directed towards supporting those with significant mental or physical disability, others provide help to those with complex learning disability, or problems of Sensory or severe Memory / Cognition problems. WBC is statutorily (all these services are legal responsibilities, by the way) required also to supply financial management assistance to those people who do not have 'capacity' to manage themselves, sometimes appointed by the courts to do so.

I think this illustrates the range of work that the Council undertakes under the simple heading

Adult Services. There is more, but I am sure you have had enough description now! Performing all these is a challenge. Finance is limited, we all know. It seems, though we don't know why, that conditions are becoming more complex, meaning more time and effort per individual. We don't have enough care provision in West Berkshire generally, and are striving to increase the capacity of our local care market to cope with growing demand. However, I do commend the efforts of the Council staff that I meet, who impress me with their attitude of care to our residents who need our help.

Entirely different subject, briefly. WBC have announced that from early September, certain types of waste, classed as non-domestic, will incur a modest charge at Recycling centres. This includes, soil, rubble, plasterboard, etc. This is because it is treated differently by national waste contractors and is much more expensive for the Council to dispose of. I am told that the charges are simply to recover cost, not to make an income for the Council!

