

Account of Purley on Thames

Tales of West Berkshire

2019

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By Rick Jones published in Purley Parish News 2019

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WBC is launching a Lottery in the spring. The aim is to raise money for local good causes, which will be in addition to the commissions and grants that Council already provides directly to the Voluntary Sector.

Recently, an event was held to brief charities, voluntary organisations and other good causes about the lottery, and how they should register to receive benefit.

For the public, it works like this: When you buy a ticket for £1, you can specify which of the registered good causes you wish to receive money from the lottery. 60p of the ticket cost will go to good causes, the rest to prizes and administering the scheme. If you do not have a preference, you can leave it to the lottery panel to distribute fairly among those organisations registered. Please encourage any good causes locally that you are aware of, to apply.

One parishioner asked if we could do anything to help our swans. Apparently advice that bread is not good for them has resulted in them not being fed at all, so they are getting nothing and starving. As far as I know, there is only one family in Purley, though more of course in Reading and Pangbourne. Now, the advice is please feed them - bread is not harmful, other foods even better!

Everyone is aware that the Council is responsible for roads and verges, pavements and some footpaths. Responsibility is split between the Highways and Countryside departments. Highways I will tackle next time, but I will describe the Countryside services a little more, for your information. Put at its simplest, Countryside look after all the land owned by the Council that counts as green space, i.e., without buildings.

But they have many other responsibilities and also work in partnership to manage these green spaces, large and small:

- To manage and maintain several Green Flag (award) parks and lots of playgrounds (including Clarendon Rise and Lister Close).
- There is an innovative partnership with BBOVVT (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust) to manage the Nature Discovery Centre, and 24 other nature reserves, including Moorside Copse, Tidmarsh and Hosehill Lake Theale). The small but delightful Pikeslaw woodland is maintained by Purley Parish Council.
- To regulate caravan sites and park homes. This also involves Gypsy and Traveller sites, and dealing with illegal encampments - a real problem throughout 2018 in West Reading and West Berkshire.
- To manage Public Rights of Way (PROWS). We have 740 miles of public footpaths in West Berks, and the department liaises as regards maintenance, changes to the network - we have seen this in practice through the activity around Springs Farm, where residents have successfully fought (so far) to add to the PROWs there.

- Management of trees and hedgerows. Keeping our tree and hedge heritage intact through Tree Preservation Orders where necessary, and an advice service.
- Maintenance of roadside verges and some isolated small green spaces 'left over' after estate developments.
- Consultee for planning applications — looking at the capacity of green spaces in relation to local populations, for both wildlife and leisure, particularly regarding housing development.

Their overall mission is to safeguard these assets so that residents can access, use and enjoy them as intended.