

NEWSLETTER

April 2020, issue 38

Parish Council matters

I hope you are all keeping well? Settling into this very strange way of life is difficult. Although the news is so bleak, we are lucky to live in this beautiful area with the river and countryside a “stone’s throw” from our doors. A short walk or even a gaze through the window can be cheering.

Although officers are still going to the office regularly (albeit all on different days), Parish Councillors are continuing business from their homes. We are holding virtual Parish Council meetings and you can find the agenda and minutes of these meetings on our website. One of our tasks over the past few weeks has been to find ways to cut back on our expenditure as much as possible because closed facilities mean a reduced income for us. As expected, the Annual Parish Meeting (16 April) for 2020 had to be cancelled. If you have any queries that you might have brought up at that meeting, you can still ask us via email. Contact our Officers via email or leave a telephone message about any parish business and they will get back to you.

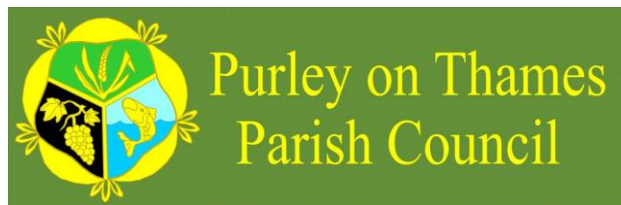
We are now coming to the end of the current parish council year. The first meeting of the new year, the Annual Parish Council Meeting, is held in May and this is when chairmen of the council and the committees for the next 12 months are usually elected. This year, however, there can be no physical meeting so everyone will remain in their current roles for the time being.

Recently, we have been made aware that some local people are concerned about the increase in speeding traffic along the A329, especially on Purley Rise. There is concern about the danger this creates particularly for the many cyclists using the roads at this time. We have contacted both West Berkshire Road Safety and the Police, and have been promised actions to address this. Meanwhile, please drive sensibly and ride carefully!

If you’re looking for ways to pass the time whilst at home, have a look at our website where we have created a page for ideas. We’d love you to share your own ideas there and make it a community resource for both adults and children. Let us know what you’ve been doing; photos, pictures, stories and reviews are all welcome. Take a look.

Hopefully by the time of next month’s newsletter, there will be “light at the end of the tunnel” but, till then, let us know if we can help you, keep safe and well.

Sue Briscoe
Chair of the Parish Council



Sad news

It is with great sadness that we have to let you know that Councillor Bill Ayling passed away on the evening of Saturday 25 April. It was not Covid-19 related.

Bill was a very well-known and highly respected member of our community, and was one of the longest-serving of the current Parish Councillors; many people will have seen and spoken to him at the monthly farmers' markets which he liked to attend to represent the council. He was always kind and generous in his support of parishioners, councillors and officers, and his politeness and gentlemanly manners never failed him.

He will be greatly missed and our deepest sympathies go to his family especially Eileen, his wife.

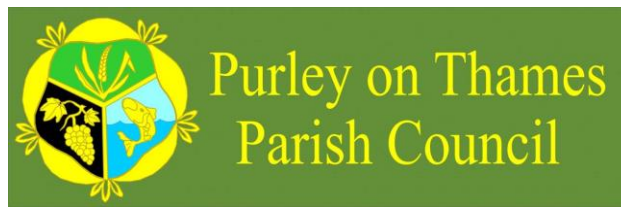
Parish facilities

Following the statement by Robert Jenrick MP on 18 April, the Parish Council decided to re-open the Burial Ground at Goosecroft to visitors. It should be noted that there is no government regulation or requirement that burial grounds must be open; the decision lies entirely at the discretion of the managing authority and, in Purley, councillors felt it was important for families to be able to visit graves of loved ones. Given it is a small site with only one means of access, it is vital for visitors to observe social distancing regulations at all times; this might mean having to wait until others leave before entering the site.

Facilities which remain closed are the playground, Barn, tennis courts and public WC at Goosecroft. Consideration was given to whether Bucknell's Meadow could be re-opened but councillors decided it would not be possible to prevent use of playground equipment, so the meadow does remain closed to the public, and the situation is under regular review.

Although most Parish Council facilities have been closed at some point over the past few weeks, the allotments have (so far) remained open throughout. They may be visited only by plot holders and social distancing guidelines must be observed at all times.

Updates will be posted on the web site as the situation changes.



New web site

The Parish Council's new, web site went live a week or so ago.

The site's address remains the same – www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk – but the overall look is a little different with space on the home page allocated to news items. This is particularly useful at the present time where regulations seem to change so often.

There's still some work to be done to bring the site's content back up to date but we hope you will bear with us and that you like the new clean, fresh feel of the site.

Particular thanks go to Councillors Martin Bishop and Gordon Adams, both of whom put a great deal of time and hard work in to progressing this project – we gather they learned quite a bit about widgets, themes and plugins in the process!

Snake trail

The existing snake (adventure) trail in the playground at Goosecroft has been in place for quite a few years and is due for replacement this year. It had been thought this work would have to be deferred until lockdown was lifted, but the contractors have now confirmed they will be on site in the next few weeks, so the new installation should be in place in May.

The new equipment is being funded by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money received from some local building developments.



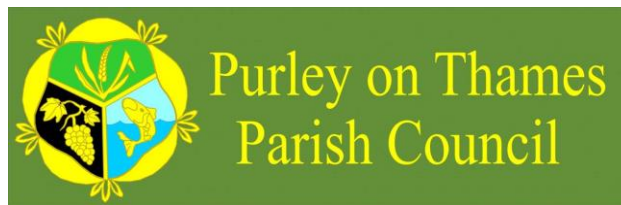
Existing snake trail

Sulham Lane – closure, 7 May

We have been advised that Sulham Lane will be closed from Purley Hall Lodge to the junction with Sulham Hill from 7.00am to 4.00pm on Thursday 7 May. This is so that Volker Highways can carry out essential repairs.

The alternative route will be via Mill Lane, The Street, Tidmarsh Road, High Street, Reading Road and vice versa. A plan of the closure can be found [here](#).

If you have any queries, please contact West Berkshire Council on 01635 519080.



West Berkshire Council

West Berkshire Council (WBC) is consistently promoting the government's #StayHomeSaveLives message and has observed the guidance by closing all council offices to the public, with only a very few key workers attending at any one time. Non-key staff are working from home.

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WBC has introduced a new e-bulletin to help keep people informed about the latest information, advice and support it offers. You can sign up to receive the updates by going to www.westberks.gov.uk/ebulletinsubscribe and giving your e-mail address.

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Please see WBC's Coronavirus (Covid-19) information for details of any changes the council has made to services it offers - info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-residents

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The council also uses Facebook pages, including the following:

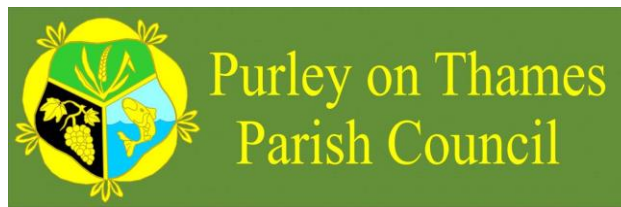
- West Berkshire Council;
- West Berkshire Community Support Hub Group; and
- West Berkshire Libraries.

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WBC continues to work with [Volunteer Centre West Berkshire](#) and [Greenham Trust](#) to give guidance and to help co-ordinate organisations representing their communities to offer support to vulnerable and elderly residents.

More information about the Community Support Hub may be found [here](#).

Purley Residents' Support Committee (PRSC) is registered and working with the Hub. Further information is available on the Facebook page, Purley Residents Support Committee, or the group can be contacted by e-mailing prscpurley@aol.com or calling 07803 346552.



Thames Valley Police

One potentially very serious effect of isolation and lockdown is that, under current regulations, those at risk of domestic abuse are likely to be spending more time with their abuser. Thames Valley Police (TVP) is aware of this and is available 24/7 to provide help and support and anyone who is at risk or is experiencing domestic abuse is able to leave and seek refuge.

In an emergency, the number to call is 999 – if speaking is not possible, dial 55 (the Silent Solution).

More information about domestic abuse, how to protect yourself or how to spot the signs of abuse may be found [here](#); there are also contact details for various support groups.

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Advice and information about coronavirus (Covid-19) and the measures the police are taking to keep the public safe may be found on TVP's [dedicated web page](#)

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Sadly, cyber criminals are preying on people's fears about coronavirus, and continue to send scam emails intended to trick people into clicking on a bad link. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has issued guidance about phishing attacks and how to deal with suspicious e-mails and messages. Please see www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/suspicious-email-actions for further information.

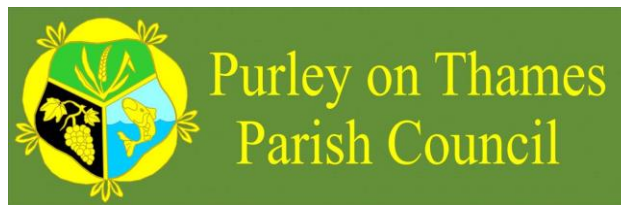
Royal Berkshire Hospital

From Monday 30 March, the Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH) site stopped running a Minor Injury Service through its Emergency Department (A&E) so that hospital staff could focus on managing the coronavirus response. This means that patients requiring a minor injury service need to attend the following sites:

- West Berkshire Community Hospital, Newbury, opening hours 10.00am to 6.30pm
- Bracknell Healthspace, Bracknell, opening hours 8.00am to 8.00pm
- Townlands Community Hospital, Henley, opening hours 10.00am to 6.30pm

Outside these opening times, patients with serious injuries (ie considered to be life or limb threatening) may attend and will be seen at the RBH Emergency Department. It should be noted, however, that this will risk exposure to Covid-positive patients, so the advice is to wait until one of the other sites is open if the injury is not severe.

Further information about this and other emergency arrangements please see [here](#).



Village matters

Purley Parish News

As a result of coronavirus and lockdown, printing/delivery of Purley Parish News (PPN) is not currently possible so, for the immediate future, the magazine will be made available online at <http://stmaryspurley.org.uk/magazine>.

Note for PPN subscribers: The April issue would usually be the first of the new subscription year but, this year, the money will be collected a little later than usual. The cost for 2020/21 will remain £5.00 for ten issues.

If you have any queries, please see the contact list in the online magazine.

Ways to help

Various groups have been set up to help support the NHS at this very difficult time by, for example, making scrubs and masks. If you have a sewing machine and would like to give some time, you might wish to look at the Facebook page for "Scrub-hub South Oxon and Berks". There is a need for non-sewing volunteers as well; please contact the group for more information.

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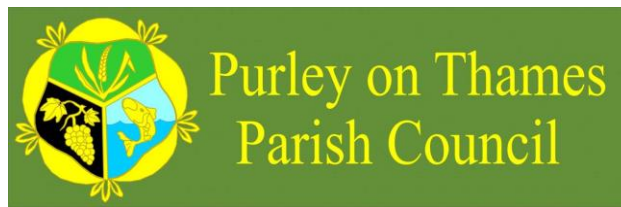
Reading's food bank, Readifood, is still running its collection points at various supermarkets including Tesco and Waitrose. It is also possible to make donations when shopping online.

For more information, see <https://readifood.org.uk/>

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We have heard there's a need for buttons as part of the call for PPE; they are needed for the headbands nurses and carers wear to protect their ears from the elastic on face masks. The size needed is three-quarters of an inch to an inch (2 to 2½ cm) in diameter.

We believe – but have not confirmed – that donations of buttons are being collected at the Welcome Desk in Waitrose on the Oxford Road.



Local news and events

As we are still in lockdown and gatherings are not permitted, there are very few (if any) events to include here. Instead, here are some snippets of local news which might be of interest.

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The Mad Duck Café has opened a take-away food service, and will also make deliveries to elderly or vulnerable people in the village. Food ranges from breakfast rolls to main meals, drinks, cake and ice cream. You can also buy potatoes and free range eggs there.

For more information, see the café's FaceBook page or call 07429 232316.

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There will be two bank holidays in the coming month: the early May (May Day) holiday which this year will be on Friday 8 May, and the Spring bank holiday on Monday 25 May.

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The General Estates Company, which bought Whitchurch Bridge last year, has suspended toll charges in order to improve access to the village during the coronavirus crisis.

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If you're looking for things to do during lockdown, or if you have ideas or activities you'd like to share with others, please see the [activities page](#) of the Parish Council web site.

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The Tilehurst branch of Barclays Bank is currently closed because of coronavirus, and is due to close permanently on Friday 29 May. For more information, see [here](#).

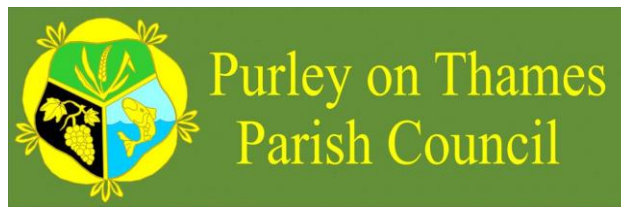
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As a result of coronavirus, [Purley Horticultural Society](#)'s trading store is closed until further notice.

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This year's [Hedgehog Awareness Week](#) is from 3-9 May.

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On 20 February, the new polymer £20.00 note entered circulation. It has the Queen on one side and artist J M W Turner on the other. The new notes replace the old paper twenties which have been in circulation since 2007 and feature economist Adam Smith.

Paper £20.00 notes are still legal tender, and six months' notice will be given before they're withdrawn from circulation.



Purley Beeches Residents Association has some interesting information as well as suggested activities for children and adults on its [web site](#).



As a result of the current lockdown, the Berkshire Family History Society has started holding talks and workshops online. For details, please see <https://berksfhs.org/>

Contact

The Parish Office is now closed to the public but, if you would like to contact us, please call 0118 984 4507 and leave a message or you may deliver things using the letterbox outside the office. We will also be accessing our e-mails, and you are welcome to contact us on:

Claire Thompson, Clerk – clerk@purleyonthames.net
Sarah Williams, Assistant Clerk – asstclerk@purleyonthames.net
Colin Moses, Amenities Officer – amenities@purleyonthames.net

Please see the Parish Council web site – www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk – for further information, activities and updates.

If you know of anyone who might like to receive this Parish Council Newsletter, please ask them to e-mail the Assistant Clerk giving the e-mail address they'd like us to use.