



Annual Report 2022/23

This report contains a brief summary of the activities of your Parish Council over the last financial year and outlines how we have managed the Parish Council's finances and assets. Join us at the meeting to find out more, ask questions and have your say.

Annual Parish Meeting
Tuesday 30 May
7pm

**at the Large Barn, Goosecroft,
Purley on Thames**

The Council's continuing aims are:

to spend your money wisely and obtain best value to maintain and enhance Purley on Thames as a desirable village for parishioners to **live, work and play**, providing good facilities and services for parishioners and by working with West Berkshire Council. To this end we have undertaken a number of improvements and activities:

Efficiencies

- continued to enhance the skills and training of all staff;
- the Clerk and responsible Financial Officer is now CILCA qualified;
- embedded the role of the new Finance & Governance Committee continuing to meet audit requirements;
- updated the Asset and Risk Registers;
- negotiated cost effective insurance cover for a 3-year period;
- recommenced Council meetings in The Barn making it easier for public attendance in a covid compliant manner;
- transferred to a local IT supplier for cost effective new equipment and ongoing support;
- reinforced cost effective, efficient relationships with payroll and pensions companies;
- The end of this year was the end of an era. Councillors Chapman, Collier, Farrow, and Jones stand down with the loss of over 100 year's experience and service for which we thank them. Despite this, we have a full compliment of councillors with the

recent arrival of Councillor White joined by the newly elected Councillors Benedict, Grady, Grindley, and Stone. 13 candidates for 13 vacancies avoided the costs of an election. A fully elected Council together with a CILCA qualified Clerk gives the Parish Council a General Power of Competence which allows much greater efficiency and flexibility.

Activities



Bucknell's Meadow playground

- continued to support the pop-up Post Office on Mondays;
- established a Climate Change Working Group;
- co-ordinated the Platinum Jubilee celebrations for the village;
- produced new look Newsletter;
- established a Parish Council Facebook page;
- commemorative benches for HRH Elizabeth II at Goosecroft as well as Bucknell's Meadow.
- established a Warm Hub and supported other warm hubs in the village;
- maintained and improved relationships with organisations in the Village including the Church, clubs, and businesses;
- held 2 Chairman's Receptions in April and October with guests of honour respectively being The Right Honourable the Lord Empey OBE and Mr Nigel Lynn CEO of West Berkshire Council;
- have been honoured that Councillor Rick Jones, supported by his wife Val, has also undertaken the role of Chairman of West Berkshire Council;
- through the Chairman represented the Council at Platinum Jubilee events and remembrance services for Queen Elizabeth II at Purley on Thames and Newbury;
- improved Bucknell's Meadow, with adult gym facilities, football practice, additional play equipment and a memorial bench for HRH Elizabeth II.

Projects in progress

- consulting on and delivering further play equipment;
- ongoing review of all leases and contracts;
- improvements to drainage at Goosecroft;
- improvements to the water supply to the facilities at Goosecroft;
- the Goosecroft Development Project to increase sports facilities;

Platinum Jubilee

The Parish Council coordinated activities in the village to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. It also underwrote and insured the events at Goosecroft, provided facilities for the event, and together with the volunteers booked and arranged stalls and entertainment, and produced accounts. A combination of much hard work from volunteers, the support of the Parish Office, work of the Councillors and spectacular weather on the day made the event a huge success both for all those attending and financially, allowing the Parish Council to grant monies to local schools and for other village enhancing projects.



The Climbing Wall



The Tree Man

- It was with great sadness that the Parish Council learnt of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. A book of condolences was opened, the Chairman attended commemorative services both in Purley and Newbury. Subsequently 2 memorial benches have been provided one at Goosecroft and one at Bucknell's Meadow, fittingly paid for from the profits from the Platinum Jubilee event.
- The Parish Council are pleased to celebrate the Coronation of HM King Charles III to whom it pledges allegiance.

Recreation

- It is pleasing to report a year where the impact on our user resident Sports Clubs due to Covid restrictions and illness has been much reduced and to report thriving and vibrant sports clubs (Bowls, Cricket, Football and Tennis) all offering opportunities for parishioners to participate in.
- Normal routine maintenance of all our facilities including Playgrounds and Sports pitches has continued throughout the year, to ensure good condition playing areas and most importantly safe Playgrounds and equipment.



- We have continued to increase play equipment adding 2 further pieces of play equipment (especially for younger children at Bucknell's Meadow as requested in the Village Plan).
- Additionally, we have replaced swings at Bucknell's Meadow, following advice received from one of our regular safety Inspections that the swings were coming to the end of their operational use. The new swings include provision for those with disabilities.

- Looking forward, the proposed extension of the Upper Goosecroft moves closer and a Grant from the government via West Berkshire (Shared Prosperity Funding) has brought the project much nearer to becoming a reality. The Parish Council is working with West Berkshire to bring the project to fruition.
- The changing weather has brought its fair share of issues for the hardworking councillors and contractors that maintain the sports facilities as can be seen from these pictures showing the extremes.





Goosecroft in the summer drought



Goosecroft in the winter floods

The Barn & Burial Ground

As a result of the increase in the cost of energy supplies, it was agreed to use the Barn as a 'Warm Hub' in the Winter months, for local people to visit, to keep warm, have a cup of tea and chat! As the January trial sessions every Tuesday afternoon was well received the 'Warm Hub' continued throughout February and March.

The Barn continues to be a busy and popular venue for local clubs and societies during the week. On Saturdays, it is a popular choice for children's parties, especially with the play area so close at hand, and has also been booked for a number of weddings.

The Parish Council thank the Friends of Purley Barn for their continued fund-raising and activities in promoting the Barn.

Snowdrops, purchased from the profit of the Platinum Jubilee events, have been planted in the Burial Ground and in some of the grassed areas of the Goosecroft carpark and around the village.

For any enquiries about hiring the Barn or in relation to the Burial Ground please contact the Parish Office.

The Burial Ground is provided and maintained by the Parish Council for Parish residents.



Regency Dance

Highways and Footpaths

Is the committee's name right? The Parish Council has no power over highways and footpaths which are the responsibility of the highway's authority: West Berkshire Council. However, the committee monitors highways and footpath and refers issues to them.

The committee's new Chairman Councillor Abrams succeeded the longstanding Chairman Councillor Collier

The committee:

- oversees the allotments provided by the Parish Council. The waiting list has reduced. If you are interested in an allotment, contact the Parish Office. Apart from providing a new lock for the gate, management of the allotment site has been fairly straightforward the major issue being the presence of a cow in the allotments. We are pleased to say she is not a regular visitor!
- manages Pikeshaw woods and commissions regular tree surveys on all the trees it owns. Pikeshaw has the highest number of trees to monitor. Feedback from local residents reporting issues is particularly helpful. Being an open space and somewhat out of sight, it is prone to spates of rubbish dumping or anti-social behaviour which the Council has to address;
- manages the Parish Council noticeboards which augment communications on the website with notice of Council meetings and other local events;



Then there are the bins- and a wide variety of them!

- provides 24 salt bins across the Parish provided and stocked with salt for local residents to use on the roads when icy;
- provides a large bin during the summer near Blount's Meadow to help with rubbish from those enjoying the river. We can also lend out litter pickers and provide sacks for groups wanting to collect litter to help keep the village looking good;
- provides 19 litter bins across the Parish;
- provides 20 dog waste bins;
- as from 1 May we have a directly appointed contractor emptying our litter and dog waste bins;
- provides dog waste bags at various sites so there are no excuses for dog waste being left – please pick it up and dispose of it properly -and if the bag dispensers are empty let the office know;

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- on footpaths and rights of way we supported the landowner in getting a new gate on Mapledurham Drive, provided by the Environment Agency, and installed by West Berks Council along with a motorcycle inhibitor attached – all as part of various measures to try to reduce the level of anti-social behaviour experienced last year;
 - the team in the Parish Office are now “qualified” to use the Speed Watch equipment. Knowing that many in the Parish view this as a major concern we are soon to borrow the equipment (again working with West Berkshire Council) and carry out checks at agreed locations.
 - does the name reflect what we do? If not have you any better ideas if so, please let us know.

Planning

The planning committee normally meets every fortnight to discuss planning applications in the Parish of Purley on Thames. Many applications go smoothly through the process without raising much concern. However, in recent months there have been a number of applications that came to the attention of the committee, that many parishioners were quite vocal about and had strong opinions about. At times like this the Chair of the Planning Committee is extremely happy to be supported by some excellent councillors. Three applications really highlight the reasons why although the Parish Council is not the planning authority and has limited powers, we can make a difference:

- we successfully suggested to all parties involved that 2 applications for Cellular Masts to be located just metres from peoples’ homes was unacceptable;
- owing to the vigilant actions of a councillor noticing that the required planning application notice had not been displayed, meaning residents were not aware of an application for the property to be converted into a children’s home, the Planning Authority were notified. As a result, an extension of the consultation period was granted enabling over 50 residents to personally raise many concerns such as the fact that situating a care home on a flood plain, where some of the residents might have accessibility issues and require 24-hour care, may not be in the best interest of those involved. A decision on the application is awaited from West Berkshire Council;
- parts of Purley are situated on valuable resources such as materials that go into building houses, motorways, and other civil engineering projects. Therefore, planning applications can be made to excavate those resources. The planning committee receives such documents which if you count the reference documents can run to thousands of pages. Sometimes tucked deep in these documents you can find mention of Purley on Thames. It is important to be vigilant, as even if not all houses are affected, repercussions associated with excavating tons of resources from any area, would affect many households in Purley on Thames. We are happy to say that close inspection of these documents, show that Purley’s resources are not required – at least just yet!
- councillors’ give up their spare time to consider and comment on all planning applications in Purley on Thames, including some that straddle borders with

Tilehurst and Pangbourne. Many applications refused or withdrawn are amended by the applicants, resubmitted, and often then approved after a number of iterations.

Finance & Governance

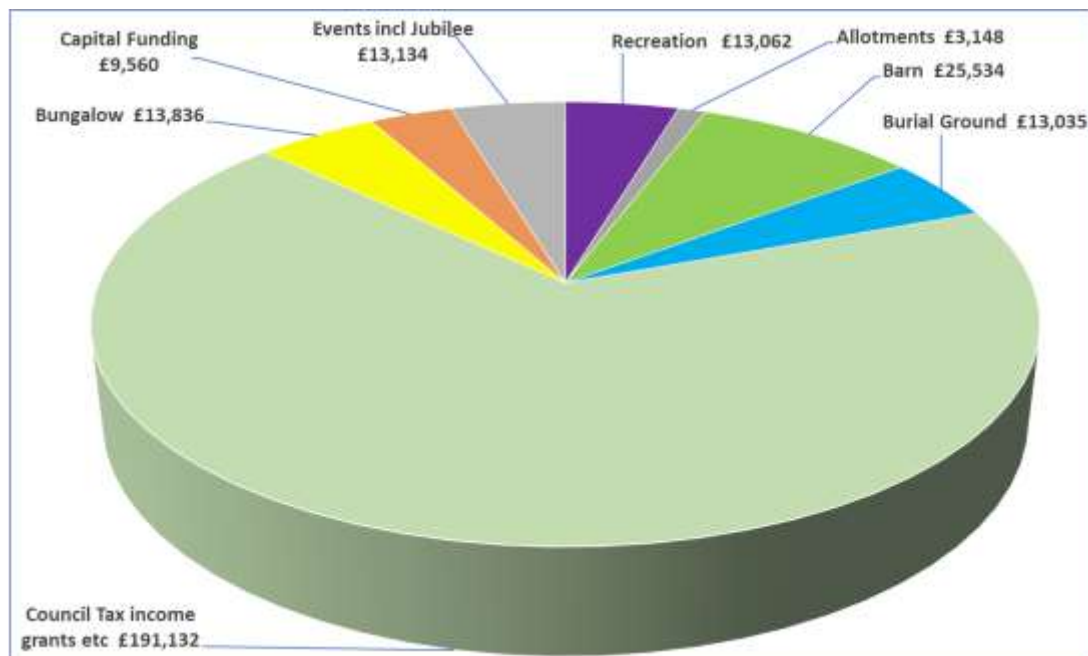
The committee meets every month to review current and forecast performance against the budget and to review certain items required by law. It also regularly reviews and makes recommendations to make sure the internal rules and processes of the Council are working efficiently. A major role is to assist the other committees with their planning for long term and large budget items which may be outside the level of their usual annual budget.

How we use 'your' money

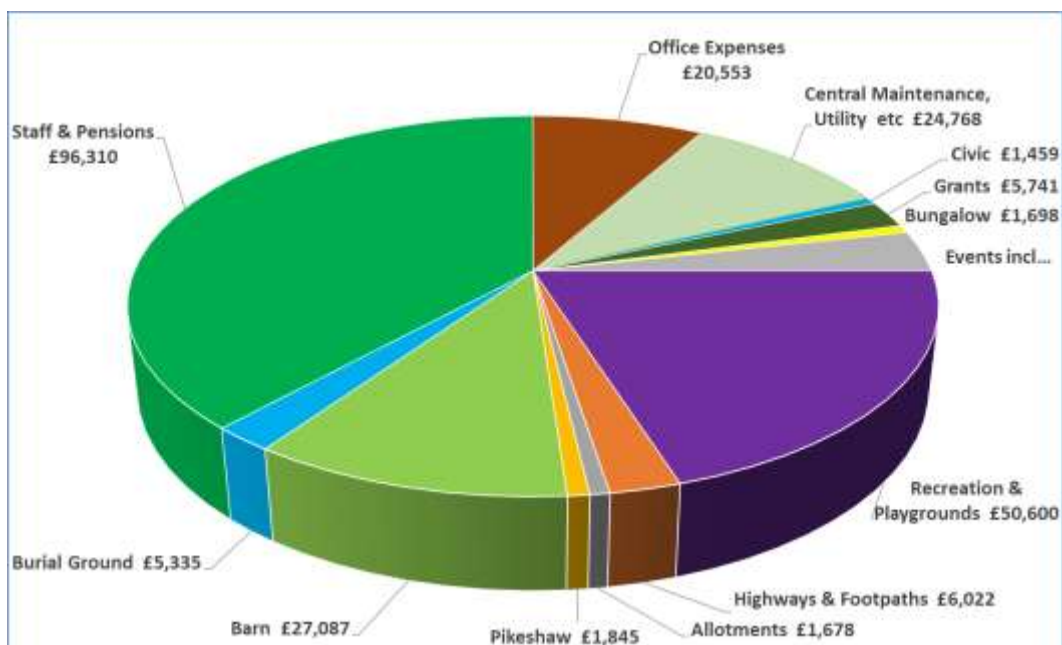
Income & Expenditure

- The Council has a legal responsibility to use public money wisely and carefully. Over the past year the affects of Covid have gradually waned but still have had some impact. This has affected the budgeted income and expenditure. Our forecast income of £282.6k is £42.0k above budget principally due to Burial Ground Fees and a lot of hard work by Committees and the office to applying for various grants. Our forecast expenditure of £251.9k is £ 6.8k below budget principally due to lower than expected costs for work on the Barn. This has resulted in our reserves increasing by £30.4k.
- Even though the effects of inflation are already impacting our budgets the Council have been able to keep the increase in the Parish Council tax precept to £1k in total which equates to an annual increase of 11p to an individual band D householder.
- These figures are provisional as at 1 March 2023, as our accounts will not be finalised until later in the year.

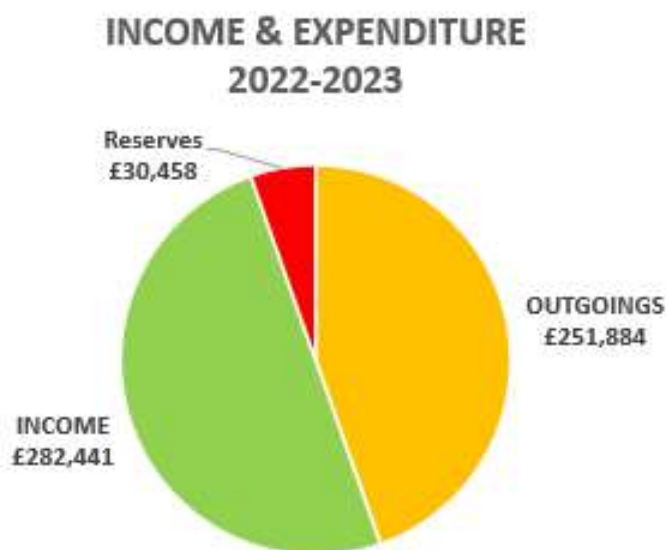
Operating Income:



Running Costs:



Income & expenditure

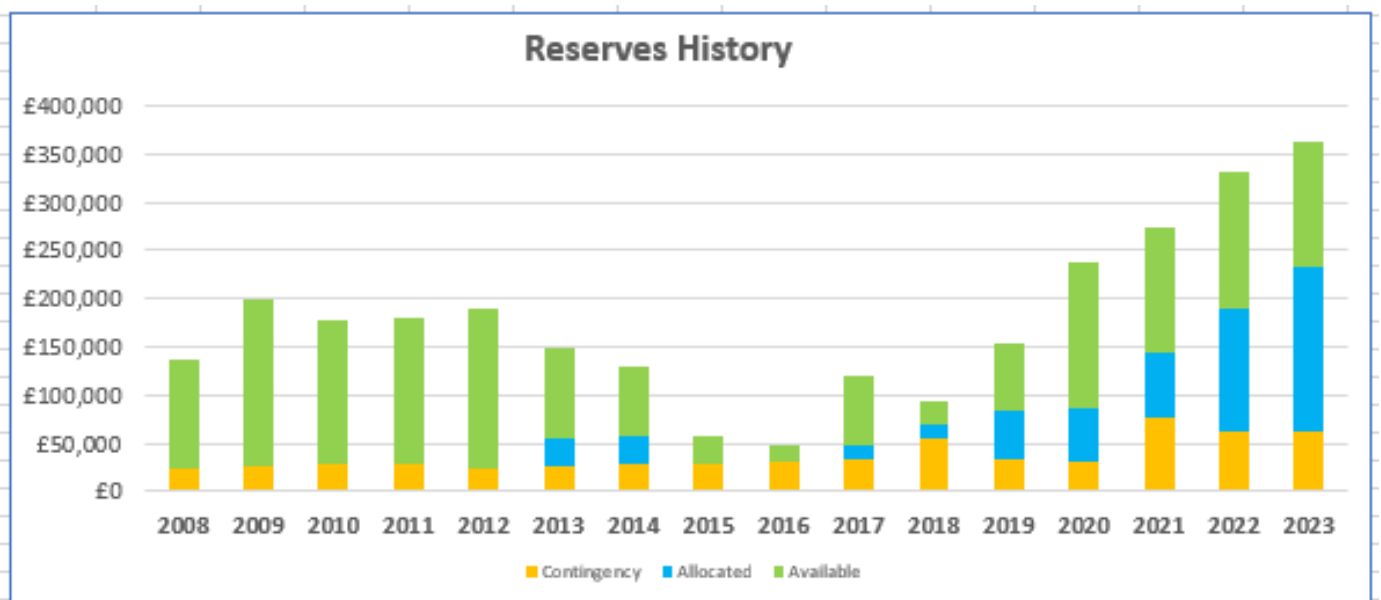
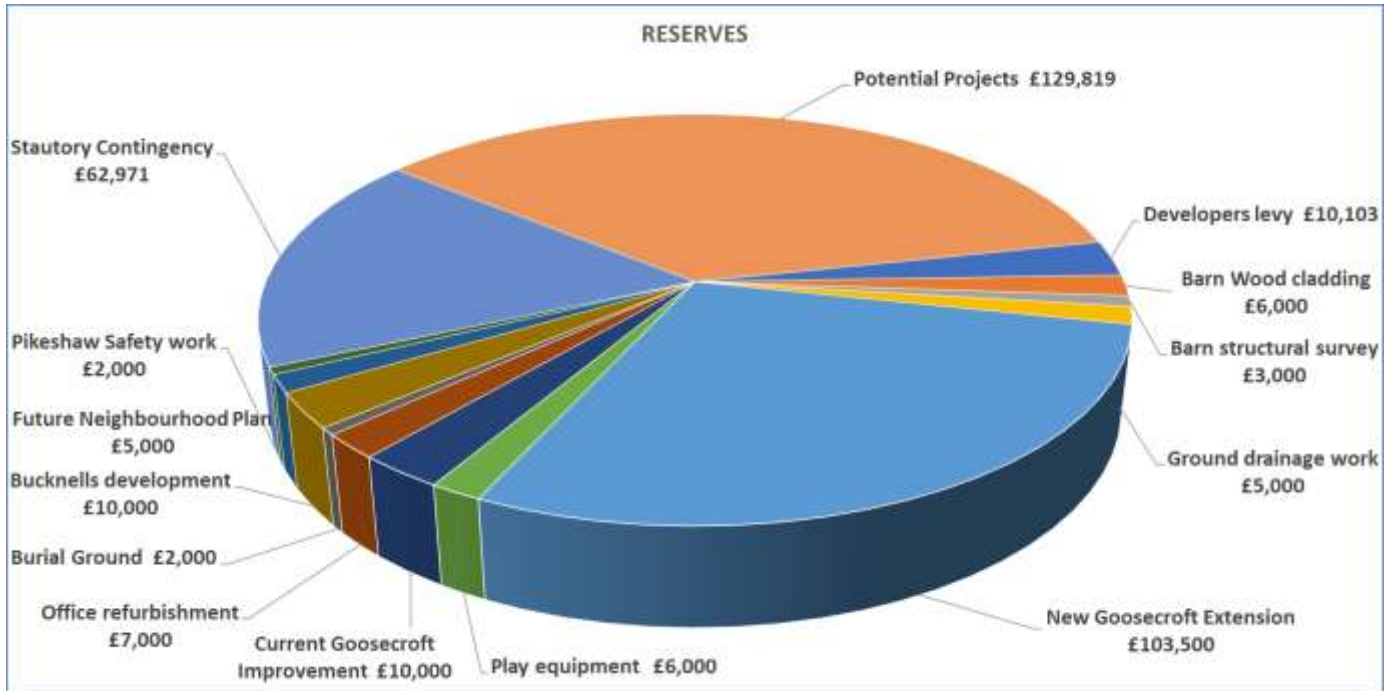


Reserves

Savings made this year allowed us to restore some of our reserves, depleted in previous years to fund major refurbishment work. We face the possibility of having to finance several very large projects over the next few years. In addition to costs of the proposed Goosecroft expansion (hopefully largely covered by outside grants) projects such as upgrading the water supply to the whole of the Goosecroft, resurfacing the car park and installing more facilities at Bucknell's Meadow are all expensive and require careful management of reserves and cash flow.

Reserves are made up of several components:

- Contingency – reserves we need to keep as a cushion against our spending which we set at 25% of our annual forecast expenditure.
- Allocated – earmarked for specific projects such as major repairs or large infrastructure changes.
- Available – reserves held to enable flexibility to cater for long term projects, additional opportunities, and emergencies. It includes monies ring-fenced.



There is more of village interest on the Parish Council website www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk

How to contact us

Parish Office: Telephone: 0118 984 4507

Email: clerk@purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk

Write: Parish Office, Goosecroft Lane, off Beech Road,
Purley on Thames, Reading, RG8 8DR

Website: www.purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk (lots of contacts and
information)

Clerk: Christopher Thompson

Administrative Assistant: Cathy Gainsford

Amenities Officer: Colin Moses

Opening hours





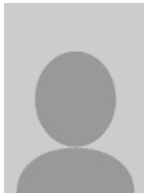











The Parish Office is now open to the public during the following hours:

Monday (except bank Holidays) 9.30am to 2.30pm

Thursday 2.30pm to 6.30pm

Councillors can be available for consultation on Thursday evenings,
between 5.00pm – 5.30pm, or at other times by appointment.

Councillors and Staff 2022/23

 Jane Langford Chairman (via office)	 Graham Rolfe Vice Chairman 0118 941 7247	 Martin Bishop Chairman Recreation (via office)	 Pamala Beddoes Chairman Barn 0118 941 4186	 Maria Abrams Chairman Highways (via office)	
 Rob Wallace 07958 482968 Chairman Finance	 Rick Farrow 0118 962 4577	 John Chapman 0118 942 6999	 Rick Jones* 0118 962 3793	 George Nyamie (via office)	
 Christine Collier	 Judy Evans (via office)	 Virginia White (via office)	 Chris Thompson Parish Clerk 0118 984 4507	 Cathy Gainsford Admin. Asst. 0118 984 4507	 Colin Moses Amenities Officer 0118 984 4507

* Also our District Councillor. Our other District Councillors were Tom Marino and Andy Williamson.

Useful Numbers

Community Safety:

Police Non-Emergency 101
Lock Keeper 0118 941 7776

District Council:

West Berkshire Council 01635 551111
West Berkshire Council emergency out of hours 01635 42161
Streetcare 01635 519080

Purley Barn (via Parish Office) 0118 984 4507

Memorial Hall 07772 129 187

Social Clubs

Purley Sports & Social Club 0118 984 3061
Purley Park Social Club 0118 942 7047

Schools

Brookfield Specialist SEN School 0118 942 1382
Purley C.E. Primary School 0118 984 2384
Long Lane Primary School 0118 942 7187
Denefield School 0118 941 3458
Downsway Primary School 0118 942 1362
Theale Green Community School 0118 930 2741
Westwood Farm Junior School 0118 942 5182
Westwood Farm Infant School 0118 942 6113

Hospitals

Royal Berkshire 0118 322 5111
West Berkshire Community 01635 273 300

Doctors

The Boathouse Surgery, Pangbourne 0118 984 2234
Grovelands Medical Centre 0118 958 2525
Westwood Road Health Centre, Tilehurst 0118 942 7421
Tilehurst Village Surgery 0118 945 2612
Tilehurst Surgery Partnership, Tyler's Place 0118 942 7528

Travel

Reading Buses www.reading-buses.co.uk 0118 959 4000
ReadiBus www.readibus.co.uk 0118 931 0000
Carebus 0118 930 4837
First GW Trains www.gwr.com 0345 7000 125
Thames Travel www.thames-travel.co.uk 01865 785 400
Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre 0118 984 4586
www.pangbourne-district-volunteers.org