



NEWSLETTER

July 2025, Issue 93

Introduction

As a new(ish) Parish Councillor I've been asked to write a profile for the Newsletter. I'll keep it brief, so you can head on to the more interesting stuff.

I'm Larry Grady (short for Lawrence but only my Mum calls me that these days) and I joined the Parish Council in 2024.

As you'd guess from the surname, my roots are Irish, but I was born in Leeds before moving to South Wales when I was 13. That usually means I can pick a winner for the Rugby 6 Nations, although the French appear to be spoiling that a bit lately.

On leaving school I briefly studied Dentistry at Guy's Hospital before moving on to do Physics at the University of Nottingham, instead.

Real life came as a bit of a shock after all that; I had absolutely no idea what to do to earn a living. For many years though, I'd been involved with a small charity that ran 'Outward Bound' style holidays for kids with disabilities, so I thought I'd try and find something like that for a while. 37 years later, I'm still working in social care and have loved (almost) every day of it; if you like people I doubt if there is a better career.

I've had lots of different roles in local authorities and voluntary organisations and qualified as a Social Worker in 1996, at the University of Reading. All of the roles had their challenges and joys (except one – I still have my old ID card from one Council. It hangs on my wall to remind me, on a bad day, that things could be much, much worse).

One thing I regretted as my career advanced was that I was getting to spend less and less time doing the things that drew me to the job in the first place, which is why I feel so lucky to have been appointed as Chief Executive of Purley Park Trust in 2011.

The Trust supports just under 100 adults with learning disabilities in the local area, 51 of whom live on our main site in Huckleberry Close. In the past people moved from all

over the country to live there but more recently our focus has been on supporting people that grew up here or have strong connections with the area.

We're probably the biggest employer in the area; there are around 200 of us doing our best to make sure that people get great support to live their lives in the way that works for each of them. There's an awful lot of work behind the scenes to keep things running well but we try very hard to keep bureaucracy and admin to a necessary minimum. This keeps costs down and helps us keep a clear focus on what works for each of the people we support.

It's a real privilege being in the middle of all that and I get very irritated with all of the doom mongering you hear about social care; it can be an amazing career, and great support really can help people transform their lives. While we don't really bother with awards it is nice to know that we've recently been independently rated as one of the UK's best places to work - because we'll only provide great support if we all look after one another.

In my spare time, there's the Parish Council and I also have unpaid roles on the Boards of other charities where people think my experience can help.

I have two older children, who live and work in Brighton and London respectively and two younger ones, both of whom attend Denefield School. They keep me fairly busy, but you might see me walking or running with our Spaniel, Feebee up in the woods or down by the river, playing tennis up at the club or (when time allows) joining in with the occasional cricket match at the brilliantly run facilities in Purley.

If you do spot me, please say 'Hi'. Purley seems to be full of people doing very interesting things and it's always a pleasure to make a new acquaintance. If I'm running, I'll also be very grateful for a breather.

Councillor Larry Grady

Local News

Reporting problems

West Berkshire Council deal with the resolution of all sorts of problems from potholes, dog fouling, streetlights, graffiti, etc. You can report any issues that you have online via the WBC website. Just follow this link: [Problem Reporting](#).

Planning Applications

West Berkshire Council invites Purley on Thames Parish Council to comment on planning applications within the parish. The Parish Council's input is not binding upon West Berkshire Council, but comments may be considered in reaching a decision.

You can also see the details of any planning application via the [Planning Portal](#) on the WBC website. If you scroll down to the bottom of the Planning Portal webpage you will find a map showing recent planning applications in WBC. You can zoom in on the map to just see Purley on Thames. Also, an orange notice should be displayed at the boundary of any property/location subject to a planning application.

Any individual can comment on a planning application, both for and against, direct to WBC by [email](#).

The Parish Planning Committee meets about every two weeks. The meeting is open to the public and there is opportunity for you to comment on any particular application. To see the agenda for the next meeting, which details the planning applications to be considered, see [Planning Committee meeting](#).

West Berkshire Council has introduced a free online service to allow residents to check to see if planning permission is required for any possible building alterations. This service will make it easier for residents to understand if they need to submit a planning application for items such as solar panels, loft conversions, adding an outbuilding or adding a dropped kerb. You can access this new service on the West Berkshire Council ["Do I need Planning Permission?"](#) webpage.

West Berkshire Council also offer planning pre-application advice service for which a fee is chargeable. More information about this can be found on the West Berkshire Council's [pre-application advice service](#) webpage.

At **your** service **Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre**



Going to see the doctor, dentist, optician or attending a hospital appointment?
Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre have been providing transport for our
senior citizens and less mobile neighbours since 1984.

Maybe we can help you too.

For further information contact our friendly office staff between
9-30am - 11.30am Monday to Friday on: 0118 984 4586
There is no charge for this service but we do invite donations.

Got some time to spare?

We are actively recruiting volunteer drivers and office staff. Drivers will be asked
to provide two referees, have an appropriate roadworthy vehicle, a current driving
licence and permission from their insurer to undertake voluntary transportation.

Mileage is reimbursed at 45p per mile.

Volunteering with the Pangbourne and District Volunteer Centre is one of the most
rewarding ways of serving your community.

You are free to do as many runs as you are able and it is OK to say no.

For further information telephone: 0118 984 4586
or email: pangbournevoleunteers@outlook.com

Area covered: Pangbourne, Whitchurch, Sulham, Tidmarsh, Purley on Thames,
Upper & Lower Basildon, Parts of Tilehurst



From Your Parish Office

Don't forget the team in the Office are happy to help where we can. Office opening hours are now:

Monday 9.30 am – 2.00 pm

Thursday 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm

(except for Bank Holidays)

However, it is a good idea to phone ahead if you want to see someone to avoid a wasted visit in the event of the team having other commitments.

Alternatively, you can telephone on 0118 984 4507 or email the Clerk at clerk@purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk

Local Club Events

Berkshire Family History Society

We have a busy events programme planned for the summer months including some interesting tours and visits. This includes: Wantage on 4th July, the Pendon Museum on 16th July, the Thames Valley Police Museum at Sulhamstead on 5th August, Katesgrove on 12th August, and the former Fairmile Hospital on 16th September. You can find out more about all of these visits on our website.

Probably the hottest ticket of all though will be to the Cookham Abbey Archaeological site and Cookham Church, which includes a site tour by members of the Friends of Cookham Abbey. The University of Reading is continuing its investigations of this archaeological site, previously featured on the BBC show "Digging for Britain". This is an important former Royal monastery and a site of national importance.



We shall discover the history of the site and be told the story of Queen Cynethryth (the wife of King Offa of Mercia and its abbess) as well as learn about some of the important finds that have been unearthed. The finds include skeletons that were buried over 1200 years ago. The Friends of Cookham Abbey are encouraging school children to visit the site this summer, so this represents the perfect opportunity for

grandparents to bring their school age grandchildren during their summer holidays to learn about an important part of British history.

Tickets cost £5 (adults) and £3 (children) and need to be pre-booked via our website: berksfhs.org

We would like to provide information of any activities that local clubs or societies are undertaking within the village or that might be of interest to residents of Purley on Thames. These can be regular or one-off events. If you would like us to include a bit about your event, please email [Cathy our Administrative Clerk](mailto:Cathy@thamesvalesingers.org.uk) with the details.

TVS Thames Vale Singers
www.thamesvalesingers.org.uk

Songs for a Summer Evening

Friday 5 July 2024
8.00pm Pangbourne Village Hall

Saturday 6 July 2024
8.00pm St Mary's church, Purley

Tickets: £12, under 16s: £6)
On sale from: Tuesday 3 June 2025
Tel: 0118 942 4372
or email: tickets@thamesvalesingers.org.uk
or Online: www.ticketsource.co.uk/thames-vale-singers
(booking fee £0.50)

How Can We Combine Fitness and Sustainability?

Written by Brett Best & Wendy Ribbons

Is there a link between the two? We think there is...

Our bodies are wonderful and an amazing part of the natural world. When we look after ourselves, we often look after the environment too. Fresh air, natural movement, local foods — what supports our health often supports the planet. And often, the choices that aren't so healthy for us aren't great for the planet either.

But before we get too deep, let's remember: a little bit of what we fancy is fine! We all know we can't do everything perfectly. If each of us does our best — for ourselves and for the environment — we are heading in the right direction. Every little bit really does help.

What Can We Do to Keep Ourselves and the Environment Healthy in Purley on Thames?

Do we need indoor gyms when the sun is shining? What alternatives are there?

We are lucky to have some brilliant outdoor options:

Bucknell's Meadow, off Mapledurham Drive, has a great outdoor gym — with a bike, step machine, and some strength machines. And it's a large, open space perfect for running, walking, or playing, all away from traffic.

We're also blessed with open spaces, the woods, and the Thames Path right on our doorstep. Why not walk, hike, cycle, jog, or run in these areas? Maybe leave the car at home and combine your walk with a shopping trip to Pangbourne, using the footpath near the railway — it's quicker than you might realise!

And while you're out and about, you could help our community stay beautiful by picking up any litter you see — a growing movement known as "plogging" (jogging + picking up litter).

Each Saturday morning, a local fitness group meets in Bucknell's Meadow — they even start with a quick litter pick before their workout. It's a way to combine caring for our green spaces and caring for ourselves!

What Can We Use to Stay Active?

If you have a little bit of space, you can move at home too, using everyday household items:

- Lifting a bag of sugar (about 1kg) or a couple of soup cans makes a great substitute for hand weights.
- Walking up and down stairs is a brilliant way to raise your heart rate.
- Carrying shopping bags (safely) around the house or garden can help build functional strength.
- Using a sturdy chair for triceps dips can add variety to your routine.
- Simple functional movements like squats, lunges, push-ups, or even balancing on one leg need no equipment at all.
- Speaking of push-ups, make them easier by doing them with your hands against a countertop.
- Dancing around your living room is another fun way to boost your fitness — and it's free, joyful, and completely equipment-free!

If you want a bit more, resistance bands are a low-cost, versatile way to build strength and flexibility, and they take up hardly any space when not using.

What About What We Wear?

The clothing options are endless, but some are better than others, try to use activewear made from recycled materials, organic cotton, or other eco-friendly fabrics, and if possible, look for brands that are responsible and care for the environment. Whilst active wear can be expensive, there are alternatives in our charity shops, online resellers, or perhaps ask your friends if they have anything they are no longer using, or if you have unwanted items perhaps you can pass on.

Remember to use reusable water bottles and avoid disposable containers.

What Other Benefits Are There?

Moving our bodies is good for our mental health as well as our physical health.

Even just five minutes in a green space has been shown in research to help improve mood and reduce stress. And here in Purley on Thames, we are lucky to have plenty of beautiful green spaces to choose from — woods, fields, riverside and railway paths, sports options and parks all on our doorstep.

- Call a friend and head out for a walk through these lovely local spots.
- Be mindful as you move — take a moment to hear the birds, the wind in the trees, the dogs and children playing.
- Breathe deeply. Take long, slow breaths in and out, and feel the benefits.
- Check out the sports options in the area (e.g. football, cricket, tennis, fitness classes, etc)

Whatever you choose to do outside, layering your clothing can help you enjoy outdoor exercise year-round, even when the weather changes; spending time in nature doesn't have to be long or intense to make a difference.

Taking care of ourselves and the environment doesn't have to be complicated — just a few small, thoughtful choices can make a real difference.

Please note:

Always consult a healthcare professional before beginning any new exercise programme, especially if you have any existing medical conditions or concerns. Outdoor activities involve natural surfaces and conditions — please take appropriate care to stay safe.

Dates for the diary:

Repair Café – Saturday 12th July / Saturday 9th August 3pm to 5pm at The Mad Duck, Wintringham Way.

- Recycling/ Terracycle – Sunday 13th July / Sunday 10th August at 7 Beech Road.
- Community Lunch – Saturday 6th September – noon at Purley Memorial Hall, Glebe Road
- Apple Pressing – Sunday 5th October at Purley Memorial Hall, Glebe Road

Purley Sustainability Group (PSG) is a community sustainability group for Purley on Thames. We are passionate about enhancing community wellbeing through projects that bring people together to improve our local environment and encourage sustainable living.

For more information:

www.purleysustainability.co.uk

info@purleysustainability.co.uk

Facebook – Purley Sustainability Group & Purley on Thames Repair Café

Please do get in touch if you want to learn more or become a volunteer at the allotments, or at the repair café or want to subscribe our newsletters and keep abreast of events

Also check <https://www.bbwellness.uk/> for more information about fitness

A poster for the Repair Café. The top half has an orange background with the words "REPAIR CAFE" in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, on a dark blue background, is the text "The Mad Duck Café, Wintringham Way, Purley, RG8 8BG" in orange. Then, in white, "Bring any broken domestic items for advice, repair, and learn how to fix them yourself with help from local volunteers". Below that, in white, "CLOTHES | ELECTRICALS | BICYCLES | TOYS & MORE". Then, in white, "2025 Calendar" followed by a list of dates: "Saturday 11th January", "Saturday 8th February", "Saturday 8th March", "Saturday 12th April", "Saturday 10th May", "Saturday 14th June", "Saturday 12th July", "Saturday 9th August", "Saturday 13th September", "Saturday 11th October", "Saturday 8th November", and "Saturday 13th December". Below the list, in white, "Monthly - every 2nd Saturday 3pm – 5pm". At the bottom, in white, the website "www.purleysustainability.co.uk" and email "info@purleysustainability.co.uk".

REPAIR CAFE

The Mad Duck Café, Wintringham Way, Purley, RG8 8BG

Bring any broken domestic items for advice, repair, and learn how to fix them yourself with help from local volunteers

CLOTHES | ELECTRICALS | BICYCLES | TOYS & MORE

2025 Calendar

Saturday 11th January
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Monthly - every 2nd Saturday 3pm – 5pm

www.purleysustainability.co.uk
info@purleysustainability.co.uk



You can find further information regarding dates and times for the [Repair Café/Other Events](#) and [Recycling](#) on the PSG website.

If you have feedback to give Your Parish Council or wish to provide an article on what interests you: an item or person of interest, a plea for a Charity or not-for-profit business but not a commercial business, your input would be most welcome, subject to editorial rights. It would be very helpful, if possible, if you could supply any copy in Word (12 pt Calibri) and/or picture format. Submissions as pdfs may be rejected. Please email your copy to [Cathy](#) by close of play on the 20th of the month.

Many thanks - Editor

Purley on Thames Parish Council does not take responsibility for articles provided by non-Council Members and would encourage you to go to the website for the article provider and check dates, times and details.

Purley on Thames Parish Council is not responsible for the content of third-party websites.

The Editor is Cathy Gainsford – Administrative Clerk, Purley on Thames Parish Council