Newsletter Autumn 2026

OLD WINDSOR RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



Old Windsor Ward Borough Councillors

Lynne Jones
Neil Knowles



Chairman's Message

From the OWRA Chairman – Jane Dawson

Welcome to the latest edition of the OWRA Newsletter.

It has been an exceptionally busy and challenging period for our Independent Borough Councillors, Lynne and Neil. Despite the pressures and demands, they have continued to work tirelessly on behalf of Old Windsor, rising to every challenge with dedication, determination, and a genuine commitment to serving our community.

Their efforts extend far beyond our village boundaries. The decisions they make and the work they undertake benefit residents across the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Free from political dogma and party influence, they remain focused on what matters most – making decisions in the best interests of the people they serve. That is the strength of being truly **Independent**.

The Old Windsor Residents Association (OWRA) was established in the 1950s and has built a proud reputation for supporting Independent Councillors and ensuring that the Old Windsor ward has a strong and effective voice in local government. OWRA exists to serve the whole community and to help ensure that Old Windsor remains a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

However, a thriving village community does not happen by accident. It depends on residents being willing to contribute a little of their time and energy. Whether it's helping at local events, supporting community projects, serving on committees, or simply lending a hand when needed, even investing a few hours each year can make a real difference. Strong communities are built by the people who live in them.

If you would like to find out more about OWRA, support our Independent Councillors, or volunteer some of your time to help our village to continue to flourish, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Together, we can continue to make Old Windsor a community we're all proud to call home.

<u>How Borough Services are improving.</u>

Contracts

The council has recruited procurement officers with the skills to ensure that the contracts we let will have accountability built in, to ensure contractors provide the service to the standards we expect. Contracts have recently been let for Waste, Highways and Grounds maintenance and we expect that the councils control over these essential services will provide a better service to residents.

Ongoing Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance funding had been removed from the annual budget, this included Health & Safety scheduled surveys and maintenance on street light columns, publicly owned trees, play areas, hedges and other infrastructure. The annual budget now includes funding for these essential services to ensure the safety of residents but there has been a backlog to address.

OLD WINDSOR OWRA RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Find us on **Facebook - Old Windsor Residents Association**
Website - Owra.org.uk - Twitter - @OldWindsorRA

A message from Neil



As we run into another winter I thought I would update you or inform new residents exactly what I have been up to this year so far.
First to explain- Lynne and I are Independents- we work solely for Old Windsor ward, under the Old Windsor Residents Association banner. In Council we form part of a loose administrative group, this is done to increase opportunities for have places on Committees etc in Council which would not be as easily gained if we were all just lone independents.
We are not a political group but rather a collection of Individuals.

Within that, this year, I've continued as Armed forces champion for the Borough and Chair of the Berkshire Civil Military partnership and with that supported veterans across the borough with many issues, disability and housing being the most important and followed this up with correspondence with Ministers when required. It's hard to navigate process for both but locally Council Officers have provided excellent support to me in this role.
The Borough has also had it's Armed Forces Covenant Employers Recognition Scheme gold certificate awarded, this is only right as we have such a large veterans and service community.
In Old Windsor and the Boltons I lead on Planning problems and enforcement, which by their nature are confidential, and try to get positive results for residents where it's possible.
I continue as Chair of the Windsor and Ascot planning appeal panel applying some common sense where possible in a very complicated set of Planning rules and law. Ive also been helping mentor other Planning committee chairs. I also invariably chair Licencing panels.
This year I've represented Old Windsor in Planning appeals at higher level working with other Parish councillors to ensure your views are heard.
Being an independent means we work with anyone for results- small wins maybe but with great impact, sometimes just by asking questions at the right time, this year we've had a review and massive reduction on Road closure charges for community events which will improve everyone's lives. I have also managed to get an acceptance of responsibility for the Bourne Ditch as it transits Bolton roads rear, together with a fantastic local campaigner, now sadly not with us, Ed Prothero.
Some things take time and others can be actioned quite quickly as sometimes its knowing who to talk to about problems.
I'll remind you that we are always looking for volunteers to get involved with the Residents Association and even those with an ambition to become Independent Councilors, it's a huge honor to champion your residents.

Old Windsor Village, the Great Park and 'the Boltons' are great places to live, nowhere is perfect but it certainly comes close and we hope that continues.

To become a member of OWRA and support our Independent councillors please visit our website **owra.org.uk**
Or contact Cllr Lynne Jones
Annual Membership £5, Direct debit available



Planning?

Few topics generate more discussion in a village than planning. Whether it's new housing, extensions, or developments on the edge of the community, residents often ask the same question: **"Why was that approved?"**

The answer is that planning decisions are not based on popularity. They are governed by strict laws, national policies, local plans and detailed regulations that councillors and planning officers must follow.

Most applications are decided by professional planning officers, while larger or more contentious developments are considered by trained councillors sitting on Planning Development panel. Their role is to weigh the benefits of a proposal against any potential harm and ensure that every decision is legally sound.

Developers can appeal refusals, major housing schemes are generally expected to provide affordable homes, and larger developments contribute towards local infrastructure through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements.

The planning landscape is also changing. Recent Government reforms have placed greater emphasis on delivering new homes, making it harder for councils to refuse some developments. Further changes expected from 2026 will reduce the number of applications considered by councillor panels, with many decisions moving to delegated powers and the current councillor "call-in" process likely to disappear.

Planning is often misunderstood because it can seem that local views are ignored. In reality, residents' comments play an important role in the process and help decision-makers understand the impact proposals may have on the community. However, councillors and planning officers must ultimately make decisions within the framework of planning law and policy.

While planning outcomes will not always satisfy everyone, the aim is to reach decisions that balance the needs of local communities with wider requirements for housing, infrastructure and sustainable development.

Understanding how the system works helps explain why these decisions are sometimes more complex than they first appear.

Update on the Jolly Gardeners

From this ...



To this ...



Work on **The Jolly Gardeners** has stalled because the developer failed to follow the approved plans.

- **The Problem:** After winning permission on appeal (under strict rules to preserve the street view) the developer removed the chimneys, shrank the windows, stripped the sills, raised the rear roof, and added unauthorized render.
- **The Current Status:** A revised application offers to return the chimneys and strip the render, but it still ignores the incorrect window sizes, sills and raised roof.
- **What's Next:** The application has been called in to the planning panel by your local councillors. Planners cannot quietly approve it.....it must now face a public panel vote to protect our local streetscape.

Borough Finances

£££

Due to historic decisions to cut council tax in successive years RBWM receives over £30m less annually than councils who levy the average council tax.

The government's 'Fair Funding Review', that was implemented in April 2026, was the biggest change to the allocation of funding to local councils in around 15 years.

The estimated impact on RBWM is that by 2028/29 we will have had our annual funding reduced by £30m – this is partly because their calculation assumes we levy average council tax and therefore our council tax income is £30m more than we actually receive. The review does not take into account additional demand of services or inflationary costs.

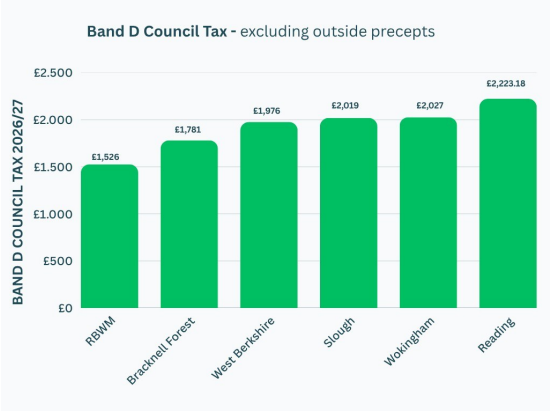
In fact the 'Fair Funding Review' leaves us with just our council tax income to provide services..... with that income being £30m less than it should be.

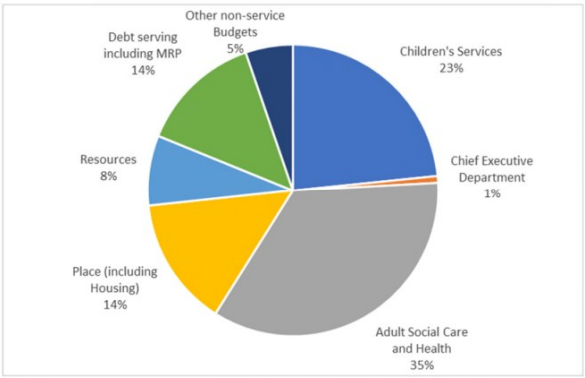
Currently council tax makes up 75% of funding in RBWM however the outcome of the fair funding review indicates that it will be 96% of income in 2030/31. Put in simple terms the new formula will result in the councils income to fall in cash terms even if council tax goes up.

And we are a low cost council, RBWM has the lowest spend in Berkshire for Adult Social Care and second lowest for Childrens' Social Care (per head of population). These two areas account for nearly 60% of our spend.

Last year we had a Medium Term Plan that, although challenging did address the financial issues and put the council on a sustainable footing over the coming year. .....The government has thrown a grenade into that plan and now it is certain that the council will, despite the budget including savings of 6.4m, require additional Exceptional Financial Support from government to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 and over the medium-term..... Unless central government review the 'Fair Funding' assumptions, not expect residents to meet the £30m funding gap by seeing an uplift of £400 in council tax over the next 2 years..... and fund RBWM adequately.

Cllr Lynne Jones





RBWM online—My Account

You now have the ability to create an online account, giving you access to many of your requests and **allowing you to track the progress**. The services available via your account are:

- Make a complaint, pay us a compliment or leave a comment
- Report a missed bin collection—Order a new bin or replace a damaged bin
- Sign up to a Green Waste subscription
- Get help to put your bins out
- Request a collection of large items
- Renew your bus pass
- Apply for a blue badge
- Apply for school transport
- Appeal a school place decision

Please visit www.rbwm.gov.uk to sign up.
You can access the 'My Account' link on the home page, below the 'Services' icons.

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