



An invitation!

Finchampstead residents and representatives from local organisations and businesses are warmly invited to our Annual Gathering on Wednesday 8 March at 7pm.

This event, held at the FBC Centre, will give you a chance to learn about the work the Parish Council does. Most of our Councillors will be present, with representatives from all of our committees - Amenities; Finance & General Management; Planning; Rights of Way; and Roads & Road Safety. We are always pleased to hear from our residents and there will be a chance to talk to the Councillors after the presentations.

The event will also include a short presentation on the work of Citizens Advice Wokingham, one of the many organisations the Parish Council is pleased to support with grant aid.



Finchampstead

Parish Council

is pleased to invite you to the 2023

ANNUAL GATHERING

**for Parishioners and others involved with the Parish
on Wednesday 8 March 2023 at 7pm at the FBC Centre**

Please come along and hear about our work over the last year. There will be an opportunity to chat to Parish Councillors over refreshments after the meeting. The event will include a presentation from Citizens Advice Wokingham.

FBC Centre, Gorse Ride North, Finchampstead RG40 4ES
Tel: 0118 908 8164 email clerk@finchampstead-pc.gov.uk

Grants and donations

Each year the Parish Council sets a budget for grants and donations for local organisations and projects which provide valuable services or facilities for the Parish and its residents.

In previous newsletters we have updated you on grants awarded this year, and on the donations given to our local community halls, the St. James' Churchyard and our local primary schools.

To add to our previous awards we have now awarded a grant of £1000 to the Link Visiting Scheme, and have committed a huge £40,000 to help the Finchampstead CE Primary School provide improved sport and play facilities in its grounds. This includes multi use games areas and a trim trail. We are delighted to be able to help the School, and therefore local children, in this way.

We are already accepting applications for 2023/24 and those received to date will be considered by the Council in May.

Applications can be submitted at any time - you can find the application form on our website. If you would like to discuss whether your organisation or project would be eligible please get in touch.

The Parish Council is always happy to discuss larger capital projects which it may be able to support - please get in touch for more details at clerk@finchampstead-pc.gov.uk



COST OF LIVING HELP

Visit the Hardship Alliance's cost of living help hub for the latest advice for you and your family.

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/cost-of-living/>

The hub continues to be updated with the latest advice and support. Visit the hub for information on how you can get support with food and fuel, your health, household bills, household essentials and more.

It also provides details on how to register for priority services - extra support from utility providers for vulnerable people if we have power cuts or lose water supply locally.

Talk to someone if you need help

Contact One Front Door, a service led by Citizens Advice, Wokingham, that helps residents find the most appropriate support.

Call 0808 278 7958, Monday to Friday or visit

<https://citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk/onefrontdoor/>

The **Citizens Advice Mobile Advice Unit** will be at the FBC Centre, Gorse Ride North between 9am and 12 noon on Tuesday 28 February 2023, providing free, confidential advice, information and support.

Just drop in - no appointment needed.



Citizens Advice will be at:

FBC

**Tuesday 28th February
between 9:00 and 12:00**

**with our Mobile Advice Unit.
Providing free, confidential
advice, information and support.**



Essential Item Grants

Has your washing machine broken?

Is your cooker on its last legs?

Can't afford to replace it?

Do you need help with paying debt-related fees?

Wokingham United Charities may be able to help...

We have partnered with Citizens Advice Wokingham to provide our essential item grants. Citizens Advice offer free independent, impartial advice and support to people in need.

We realise sometimes everyone needs a helping hand. By partnering with Citizens Advice Wokingham we can provide holistic support to help you when you need it most. Citizens Advice Wokingham can signpost you to relevant support agencies and if eligible, can apply on your behalf for an essential item grant.

We may also be able to help with transport costs, school trips, counselling and other essential items or services.



To find out how we can help, please call Citizens Advice Wokingham. Citizens Advice Wokingham will discuss your circumstances to find the best way you can be supported and if applicable, submit the Essential Item Grant Application.

Citizens Advice Wokingham

0808 278 7958

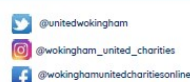
www.citizensadvicewokingham.org.uk

*Grants are subject to eligibility criteria and can be applied for once per calendar year for up to £500. Please contact us for further information.

Citizens Advice Wokingham can help with issues around welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment law and much more.

About Wokingham United Charities...

Wokingham United Charities is a registered charity (number 1107171) and helps local people in poverty, hardship or distress by providing charitable grants and running semi-sheltered Almshouses. We are an amalgamation of 21 local charities and have supported people in need in Wokingham since 1451.



Westende, London Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1YA
0118 403 2980
grants@wokinghamunitedcharities.org.uk



Library events



Do you love LEGO? LEGO Club at the Finchampstead Library is held on the first Thursday of each month from 3.30pm to 4.15pm.

This club is open to children aged 7 to 12 years.

Booking is required to attend this club and parents are required to remain on site. You can book by visiting www.wokingham.gov.uk/libraries

Bookstart Baby is a universal book gifting programme in England and Wales provided by BookTrust. Every child aged up to 12 months is eligible for a free pack of books and resources, designed to support and encourage families to read with their child as early as possible. Bookstart Baby is gifted by libraries, health professionals and children's centres in Wokingham Borough.

You can pick up a free pack at Finchampstead Library on 1 March between 10am and 12 noon.

Visit www.wokingham.gov.uk/libraries for more information on events and activities - there is plenty for adults too!



Recycle your running shoes!



You can pop into one of the leisure centres managed by Places Leisure in the borough and drop off your unwanted running shoes in the donation box there.

Visit the Wokingham Leisure Centre (formerly Carnival Pool); St Crispin's Leisure Centre or the Arborfield Green Leisure Centre (Sheerlands Road).

Even if your shoes are no good to be reused – you can still donate them rather than letting them sit in landfill!

JogOn works with its partner to distribute them to 11 destinations around the world. For shoes unsuitable to be used again, JogOn will have them shredded and incinerated for energy or used for resurfacing playgrounds.

JogOn's mission is to remove one million shoes from landfill. <https://www.jogonagain.com/>

Blue bag delivery

The annual blue bag delivery is underway and will be completed by 13 March. Wokingham Borough Council will be delivering one roll of 54 bags to encourage residents to recycle more and reduce waste. Recycling is easy and most of your household waste can be recycled. A recent review of the contents of blue bags found 57 percent of the contents could have been recycled. To find out your delivery date - and for lots of useful information about how to reduce, reuse and recycle more - visit www.wokingham.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling



Distraction Thefts



Thames Valley Police is issuing advice to local residents following reported distraction thefts across the Bracknell and Wokingham areas.

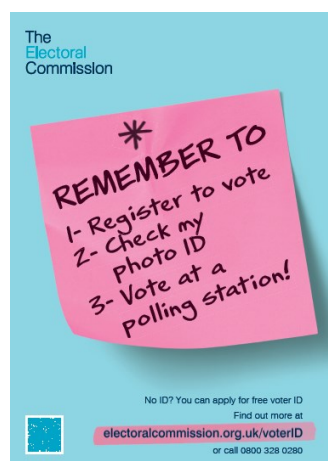
Offenders appear to be targeting vulnerable and elderly individuals using a number of distraction techniques:

- Approaching the victim carrying a clipboard to engage with them and talk about charity work and donations. The criminal then tries to hug or kiss the victim in order to distract them and obtain their watch or wallet.
- Distracting victims at ATMs and car park payment machines by engaging them in conversation, asking questions or telling them they have dropped something. They then take their card and subsequently use this to make purchases or withdraw cash.
- Distracting victims when loading shopping into their car by asking them to sign something, look at a map or claiming someone has damaged their car and asking them to look. While the victim is distracted, the offender takes their handbag or purse. These offenders often work in teams with one watching the victim inputting their pin in the store or supermarket and another distracting them in the car park.
- Purse dipping at supermarkets. Purses have been taken from handbags left on trolleys or by dipping into an open handbag.

Please be alert and aware of anyone approaching you or near you when you are at an ATM, a payment machine or in a supermarket car park. Being aware of your surroundings and not distracted makes it harder for people to take advantage.

Offenders may watch as you key in your PIN so please be vigilant. Always cover your PIN and keep an eye on your card at all times. If someone taps you on the shoulder, or tries to speak to you, just ignore them.

If you see or suspect that a crime is taking place, please call the police on 999. If you have any information regarding these offences or witness any suspicious activity, please use our online reporting form at www.thamesvalley.police.uk or call 101. Alternatively, call Crimestoppers anonymously on free phone 0800 555 111.



Remember to register to vote

This is a new requirement, which means registered voters will need to show suitable ID at a polling station in order to vote.

This comes into effect from the local elections in May this year - including Wokingham Borough Council elections.

For more information visit engage.wokingham.gov.uk and look for the Voter ID project.

Or visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

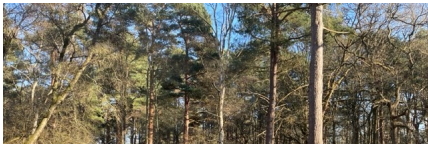


News from the Friends of Finchampstead Ridges

Following the recent heavy rain followed by freezing weather the car park at Simon's Wood had taken a bit of a battering.

Our first Wednesday in February was focused on the repairs that were required.

The National Trust Ranger team ordered in 80 tons of aggregate and the task then was to put this in place. The amount of material ordered allowed target areas of the car park to be backfilled, and to raise or amend levels where required.



The volunteer team was once again joined by our corporate supporters from Salesforce and with barrows, shovels and whacker plate most of the 80 tons was placed on the day. The weather gods were looking down, and, although mighty chilly, everyone soon warmed to the task.....literally!

www.finchridges.co.uk

Walks from Simon's Wood

Simon's Wood is an area of wet woodlands and lowland heath providing an increasingly rare habitat which supports life for many birds and invertebrates. On local walks, you can explore the views, flora and fauna of the broadleaved and coniferous woodlands, the naturally created Heath Pond, and the rare delights of a heathland habitat.

The Parish Council has a 4 mile circular walk starting from the Simon's Wood car park. Visit www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/local-facilities/local-walks

The Friends of Finchampstead Ridges website www.finchridges.co.uk has trail maps for Simon's Wood, the Ridges and Ambarrow Hill.

Alternatively visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk and search for Simon's Wood Trail for information on a 1.3 mile walk.

Wellbeing Walks

Are you looking to work on your fitness? Short beginner walks organised by The Ramblers' Association are being held across the borough, including several regular walks in and near Finchampstead. All walks are over easy terrain and at a steady pace to suit everyone.

<https://beta.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/wellbeing-walks>





Next steps for solar farm

Wokingham Borough Council has appointed Bouygues Energies and Services as the contractor for the new solar farm on land between Barkham and Finchampstead.



Planning permission for the 29 mega watts (MWp) capacity solar farm was granted in September 2021. This means that on a good day, the solar farm could generate 29 mega watts of energy - equivalent to the power needed for 8,500 homes.

The solar farm is just one of the many ways WBC is helping the environment by generating sustainable power within the borough. It also has financial benefits for the public purse.

Work will now start on designing the solar farm, with initial survey work starting in the coming weeks meaning residents will start to see more activity in and around the site.

It is intended that construction work to install the solar panels will start towards the end of the year.

Alongside the solar panels the site will also see the planting of thousands of new trees as part of the council's tree project, and a new greenway route aimed at better connecting Arborfield, Barkham and Finchampstead to the existing network of rights of way to the north.

<https://news.wokingham.gov.uk/news/contractor-appointed-solar-farm/>

My Journey Wokingham Challenge

Wokingham Borough Council has joined up with **Innovation Valley Rewards** to encourage residents, employees and students to be more active and make sustainable travel journeys.

The My Journey Wokingham Challenge finishes on 31 March 2023.

People can download the free Innovation Valley Rewards smartphone app, then take part in a local challenge promoted by our My Journey Wokingham team, as part of an ongoing effort to encourage healthier and more sustainable forms of travel.

You can also scan the QR code to download the app.



Individuals can log journeys and earn ValleyCoins, which can be redeemed for high street rewards or given to your favourite charity from within the app as well as earning ValleyTickets to enter weekly and monthly draws.

So whether you walk, wheel, cycle, catch the train or bus, make sure you are logging your journeys to earn rewards.

The app is part of the national ADEPT Smart Places LiveLabs initiative, a £22.9 million project funded by the Department for Transport and carried out in partnership with businesses and other local authorities across the Thames Valley.

This uses digital innovation and technology to tackle problems like traffic congestion, air pollution and energy waste while promoting cleaner, healthier and more eco-friendly lifestyles.

www.myjourneywokingham.com



Some of our recent activities

Here are just a few of the things we have been up to over the last month or so. We:

- Held a Main Council meeting and a Planning Committee meeting.
- Attended the Borough Parish Liaison Forum - Cllr Roland Cundy is the Vice Chair.
- Agreed our budget for 2023/24 and submitted our Precept Demand to the Borough Council.
- Appointed a Deputy Clerk - starting in post later this month.
- Submitted a response to the consultation on the draft Wokingham Tree Strategy.
- Nominated Cllr George Evans to represent us on the Gorse Ride Regeneration Steering Group, joining Cllr Becky Eytel.
- Organised 3 community speed watch sessions, reporting 61 vehicles found exceeding the speed limit to Thames Valley Police.
- Received applications from candidates wishing to be considered for co-option as Parish Councillors - to fill our two vacancies. The Parish Council will be meeting the candidates on 23 February.
- Continued planning our Annual Gathering to take place on 8 March (see the invitation on the front page of this newsletter).
- Continued liaising with WBC over the Finchampstead Community Litter Pick to be held on 26 March - more details in our next e newsletter.



The Finchampstead Future Group, made up of Parish Councillors and local volunteers, has submitted the **Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan** to the Borough Council.

The independent examination of the Plan is now underway.



www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk/community-projects/neighbourhood-development-plan/

Staff are now working in our office at the FBC Centre on certain days, while working from home on other days. Some of the staff are part time. If you would like to see a member of staff please get in touch to ensure we will be available when you wish to visit.

Members of the public are welcome to attend a Main Council or Committee meeting - please contact us if you would like to do so.

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH OFFICE, FBC CENTRE, GORSE RIDE NORTH, FINCHAMPSTEAD RG40 4ES
Tel: 0118 908 8164 email: clerk@finchampstead-pc.gov.uk www.finchampstead-pc.gov.uk



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