

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2024**

Monthly Parish Update

Vale of White Horse District Councillors

**Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and****Cllr Debra Dewhurst**

## Hello from Hayleigh and Debra

March brings springtime as we start to see daffodils sprouting up which we are so happy to see!

During February, Vale of White Horse District Council held a full council meeting where we set our annual budget for the 2024/2025 financial year. Despite the major challenges all councils continue to face, including government funding increases not keeping pace with inflation, council tax limited to a below inflation increase, the continued rise in the cost of living and ongoing economic and political uncertainty, the budget does not propose any reductions to district council services and continues to invest in key areas. Read more about this later in the report.

Both councils' have launched the Playing Pitch and Leisure Facilities Consultations which will decide what sport facilities are needed in the Vale and South Oxfordshire. You can view the consultation on our [Join the Conversation](#) and these will be sent out to sports clubs and organisations.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions for us as councillors, please do email us. As a reminder, council meetings are held in public and if you wish to address council or committee, you can contact Democratic Services ahead of time. If you need more guidance on this, please let us know!

*We use these monthly updates to keep you updated on our activities and general council news. We also post on our councillor Facebook Pages:*

[www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh](http://www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh) & [www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell](http://www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell)

Please get in touch with any issues or concerns via email

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## Community Support

### Community Hub

The Hub can offer support and direct people to help on a range of things including Cost of Living, food support, etc. If you are struggling financially or just finding life difficult, the community hub can help. Whether it's practical support or just advice, please get in touch:

- **Call:** 01235 422600
- **Email:** [communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk)

The office hours are 8.30am - 5pm Mon to Thurs, 8.30am-4.30pm on Fri (and closed on bank holidays).

[Find out more about the community lottery on our website](#)

### Household Support Fund referral agencies needed

The Vale is looking for some formal organisations to help them process cost-of-living payments.

Support is available for local people who are struggling with cost-of-living pressures and the rising cost of food and energy bills. We're working in partnership with organisations in South Oxfordshire and the Vale to deliver the Household Support Fund - which is a voucher scheme. Local organisations are acting as referral agents for the scheme which enables them to make direct referrals for this support into our Community Hub for their clients.

We now need more organisations to come forward to act as referral agents to help ensure help gets to those who need it most. The fund closes on 31 March 2024, or sooner if it is fully allocated.

For more information, contact our Community Hub team by calling 01235 422600 or email

[communityconnectors@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communityconnectors@southandvale.gov.uk)

## Local News

### Health Centre Update

On 1<sup>st</sup> March, the Cabinet member for affordable housing, infrastructure, development and governance at the Vale, Cllr Sue Caul, made the decision to approve the use from the 20% CIL public healthcare allocation of the infrastructure proportion, as set out in the council's April 2021 CIL spending strategy. CIL stands for Community Infrastructure Levy and is money collected from developers. It can be spent on any number of local projects and this pot of money is allocated for generically for healthcare. This is in addition to the S106 money ringfenced specifically for the GWP surgery.

Read below and [Click here](#) to read more about it.

- 1) Funding £194,264 (50% of the application from NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) towards ancillary costs relating to delivery of the Great Western Park (GWP) Health Centre.
- 2) Award a total of £388,528 funding (including 50% contribution from South Oxfordshire District Council CIL healthcare allocation) to BOB ICB, subject to entering into a third-party funding agreement.
- 3) Delegate to officers to enter into a funding agreement with the ICB that governs the release of funds and sets out project monitoring and claw back clauses and to release funds to the ICB in accordance with the funding agreement once signed and sealed.

### Valley Park Update

This section of our report provides an overview of the current live planning applications for Valley Park. There are often several live applications relating to the development due the nature of its size and complexity.

The current live planning applications for Valley Park are listed below along with an update on the status of each provided by the Vale planning officers.

#### Application Decided

**P23/V2664/DIS** – approval of details reserved by condition 10 (framework plan) of the outline planning permission

#### Applications Under Consideration

##### **P22/V2744/RM – 246 dwellings – Taylor Wimpey first housing parcel**

The Environment Agency has withdrawn its objection following the submission of flood modelling. Following feedback from officers on revised details submitted in February 2024, Taylor Wimpey has now submitted revised plans which have been uploaded to the application file (1 March amendments). The plans seek to address landscape matters raised by officers.

##### **P22/V0604/RM – infrastructure for Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey first housing parcels**

This application went to planning committee on 6th March, as Harwell Parish Council objected to the application whilst Vale's planning officers recommended it for approval. The Vale's planning committee approved the application and you can see the [Minutes details on public web site](#)

##### **P22/V2624/DIS – approval of details reserved by conditions 23 and 24 (surface and foul water drainage) of the outline planning permission**

Further details were submitted and added to the file on 12 January 2024. The details seek to address comments raised by the council's drainage engineer and their response to this latest submission is awaited. OCC as lead local flood authority has no objection. Thames Water has no objection.

##### **P23/V0659/DIS – approval of details reserved by condition 33 (Travel Plan) of the outline planning permission**

No change - Officers understand that the developers have approached OCC directly to discuss the content of the travel plan and we expect a revised travel plan submission once those discussions are concluded.

##### **P24/V0237/DIS - Discharge of condition 10 (Framework Plan) in relation solely to Parcel 2 of the overall development on application P14/V2873/O**

This application relates to that part of the Valley Park site shown in the attached plan. Officers still need to consider the details.

## Climate & Environment News

### Councils have a joint plan for action on air quality

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have adopted a new joint Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in the districts over the next four years.

### New planning rules mean good news for nature recovery

Biodiversity Net Gain– which came into law nationally on 12 February 2024 – is not a new concept for the councils, whose officers have been working on similar approaches to enhancing the wildlife value of new developments since becoming the first authorities in the UK to successfully secure a BNG agreement in 2013.

### Retrofitting measures

A large portion of the Vale of White Horse Council area's greenhouse gas emissions come from people's homes. If we want to reduce our emissions, making our homes more efficient will play a big role – not to mention, saving bill payers money.

The councils have set up new webpages to help residents who want to retrofit energy-saving measures to their properties but are unsure if they need planning permission. This specially created online guide offers information whether people want to add simple insulation, solar panels, air source heat pumps or cladding to their properties.

They can be found at [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/retrofitting-rules](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/retrofitting-rules)

## Council News

### Securing a sustainable future for The Beacon Arts Centre and Community Centre

Robust plans are being prepared this month to secure a sustainable and 'best value' future for The Beacon Arts and Community Centre. The arts and community centre has provided Wantage and the surrounding areas with an important and lively focus for arts and the community since 2014.

### Vital services guaranteed as 2024-25 Vale budget is approved

Residents in the Vale of White Horse will continue to receive quality, cost-effective local services after district councillors approved the 2024-2025 budget. Despite major challenges, including below inflation funding increases, the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing economic and political uncertainty, thanks to careful financial management, the council has guaranteed vital public services, such as the district's Community Hub which provides support residents who are struggling financially, and will continue to invest in key areas which benefit people across the district.

For 2024-25, council tax for services provided by Vale of White Horse District Council has been set at £156.69 for a Band D property for the entire year. Vale residents will therefore continue to pay one of the lowest rates in the country for services provided by a shire district and significantly less than the equivalent fee paid by those living in Oxford. The district council's services are funded, in part, by only a small portion (7 per cent) of the total council tax paid by Vale households.

### Also covered at our Full council:

**A motion opposing Thames Water's proposed price hike was passed:** The motion, put forward by Cllr Emily Smith, noted the council's concerns around Thames Water's proposal to increase household water bills to an average of £735 by 2030, an increase of 60% in cash terms.

The council's resolutions included a request for the leader to write to the Chair and Chief Executive of Ofwat and to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, setting out this council's opposition to the proposed Thames Water price hike and to send a copy of this letter to the MPs for Oxford West & Abingdon, and Wantage constituencies.

**Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of the Vale, said:** "We're doing everything we can to maintain pressure on Thames Water, which continues to put profit and shareholders before the needs of residents and its customers. The company continues to pursue its plans for a gigantic reservoir that would decimate the countryside of our district, while pumping raw sewage into our rivers, and now has the audacity to hike prices way, way above sky-high inflation right in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis."

### £760K boost for good causes in the Vale

Two good causes providing information and advice for residents in the Vale have been awarded £760,000 this month. Vale of White Horse District Council has given support to Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice (£460,000) and Vale Community Impact (£300,000) through their Partnership Grant scheme.

### [Changes coming next year to garden waste service in South and Vale](#)

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have set out plans to change the way their garden waste service is paid for in 2025. The councils' have agreed a permit scheme from April 2025 which will include subscribers receiving a sticker for their bins to identify them as fully paid-up.

### [Changing Places Toilet for all opened in Wantage](#)

The Wantage community has come together to help fund a new Changing Places Toilet in the public toilet block in Portway. The Changing Places toilet is a unisex facility that is specially designed with extra space and equipment so it can be used by people with a range of disabilities.

### [Apply now for flooding financial support](#)

Residents whose homes were internally flooded and businesses who were affected by flooding as a result of Storm Henk in January can now formally apply for financial support in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. If you believe you are eligible for this grant you can apply **before 1pm on Monday 18 March**.

### [Enjoy fun for all the family this Easter](#)

Fun activities and community days, family exercise, a museum of marvellous things and a cartoon circus are just some of the free and low-cost activities available for children and their families to enjoy during the Easter holidays. The activities are expected to be very popular so, where required, residents are encouraged to book now to avoid disappointment. **For a full run down of what's on and details on how to book, visit [southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities](https://southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities).**