

**Monday 8th September 2025**

Monthly Parish Update

Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and**Cllr Debra Dewhurst***Vale of White Horse District Councillors*

Hello from Hayleigh and Debra

We hope you have enjoyed a wonderful summer with warm weather locally, and hopefully some time spent off work relaxing with loved ones.

In July, Vale of White Horse District Council had its full council meeting. Items on the agenda included, approving developer funding (known as S106) to be used for a community park in Steventon and a Games area in Drayton and two motions relating to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill – one about the proposed changes that will have a negative impact on democracy within planning decisions – removing some decision making power from Planning Committees and the other on changes that will remove environmental protection. We strongly believe that Planning Committees bring value and local knowledge to the planning process, and rarely slow down delivery of housing. To read more, head to the Vale website: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/governments-proposed-planning-reform-not-wanted-or-needed-says-council/>

There was a third motion expressing the Council's support for Community Energy Benefit options on Large Renewable Projects. It's clear that for more energy security and cheaper electricity, we need to have large renewable energy schemes. A way to get more local communities supporting them, they must come along prescribed benefits for those communities. We believe the Government should provide a framework for what those benefits look like – whether it's a % of the profits, options to buy shares, money towards local infrastructure or cheaper energy bills.

Finally, as councillors, we continue to push the BOB ICB to deliver its promise to provide a GP surgery at Great Western Park. To read more, head to the Vale website:

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/uncategorised/councillors-reiterate-the-need-for-new-didcot-health-centre-as-soon-as-possible/>

As a reminder, council meetings are held in public and if you wish to address council or committee, you can contact Democratic Services. 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.

Please also follow us on facebook:

www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh & www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell

Or email us: hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

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

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

Climate & Environment News

We're in the top ten district councils in the the UK for action on climate and nature

Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire district councils are in the top ten performing district councils in the country for taking action on climate and nature recovery, according to research by an environmental organisation. Both councils, which have just published their new joint nature and climate action plan, were rated in the top ten of the Climate Emergency UK's (CEUK) 2025 [climate action scorecard](#), a league table of the country's councils published earlier this month.

Planned site for waste refuse vehicles

The lease that the councils have at Culham, where waste vehicles are currently stored is coming to an end, and so the councils went through an exercise earlier in the year to find a new year. Great Haseley was determined to be the most suitable site.

South Oxfordshire District Council has submitted a planning application for the proposed vehicle depot site.

The full plans can be viewed here:

<https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P25/S1653/FUL>

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are working on securing a long-term vehicle depot at Haseley Trading Estate (the former Ariens/Countax site) in South Oxfordshire, for parking their shared refuse collection and street cleansing service's vehicle fleet. No refuse will be kept on site.

The plan is to redevelop and retain one of the existing buildings and make improvements to the site, such as adding solar panels on the existing building, improving the screening with planting and carefully managing the adjoining woodland.

Fly Tipping

Vale of White Horse Council takes a strong line on fly-tipping, and has a good record of taking offenders to court and successfully prosecuting. There was a recent example of fly tipping in a A34 layby and magistrates imposed a £300 fine. If you spot a fly-tip or suspect that someone is involved in fly-tipping, please report it by visiting whitehorsedc.gov.uk/flytipping

On the go? Please take your recyclables home!

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are calling on residents to change the way they deal with litter on the go.

Up to 70 per cent of the things that are put in public litter bins could be recycled if taken home. Unfortunately, once recyclables are mixed with food waste and other rubbish in litter bins they can't be recycled and must be thrown away.

This summer's **Take It Home** campaign is delivering a clear message: — **please take your empty bottles and cans home for recycling, instead of placing them into public litter bins.**

Council News

White Horse Community Lottery gives good causes a boost in the Vale

Seven charity groups across the Vale have received a total of £9,000 of unrestricted funding to support their work with local communities thanks to the White Horse Community Lottery.

Statement regarding SESRO from Leader of the Council

Cllr Bethia Thomas, Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council said: "Although we were not party to the Judicial Review, we remain opposed to Thames Water's proposal for the reservoir. We submitted our response to Thames Water's public consultation in August 2024, reaffirming our objections.

"We will continue to urge water providers, regulators and government to listen to local voices and reject these plans. The council has urged water providers to consider all the alternative solutions more seriously before committing to this reservoir. We will continue to do everything we can within our power to ensure that the voice of our community is listened to.

"The costs of SESRO seem to be spiralling. We have continually urged water providers to consider exploring all the alternative and more cost-effective solutions seriously before committing to this reservoir. I reiterate that call today given the revelation this week that Thames Water's reservoir faces an eye watering increase in costs – potentially up to £7.5bn!"

Garden Town bringing social and environmental benefits to Didcot

The Didcot Garden Town programme is bringing exciting new developments with a strong focus on enhancing community wellbeing and improving the local environment in Didcot and its surrounding areas.

Didcot is set to benefit from a new 'wayfinding' scheme to help residents and visitors find their way to sites of interest and access amenities and spaces around the Garden Town.

Significant steps are being taken to improve Didcot's green spaces, with a nature trail already completed by the South and Vale Active Communities team in southeast Didcot.

£500,000 has been allocated to implement four green spaces which is expected to start in early 2026, with the initial focus on Ladygrove and Station Road. The project aims to improve the town's appearance by making it greener, healthier and more connected, helping to enhance accessibility, inclusivity and biodiversity.

The community-led 'Healthy Didcot' programme is working with local agencies, including the voluntary and community sector, to address health inequalities. This programme is particularly focused on south and west Didcot, where a Community Insight Report identified the highest levels of health and wellbeing concerns.

The initiative includes efforts to enhance support for families with children and young people addressing complex needs and improving access to services, helping to address anti-social, educational and skills-related issues. The programme is working to increase resident employability through targeted skills development and enhanced access to opportunities, including exploring apprenticeship. Further funding has been obtained through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to help improve health outcomes in Didcot this financial year, which will be used to help kick-start the action plan, with support from local partners.

To learn more about the Didcot Garden Town's work:

You are invited to the Didcot Garden Town Community Update Meeting, which is a drop-in event from 2pm to 4pm on Thursday 18 September at the District Community Centre, 1 Gentian Mews, Great Western Park, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 6GR.

It's an opportunity to meet the Didcot Garden Town team and other organisations to hear about the latest news and updates on the health, wellbeing, sport and leisure projects and developments in the town.

Pop in anytime between 2pm and 4pm to:

- come and see what the new vibrant wayfinding signage will look like and where it will be popping up across Didcot
- have your say on what improvements you'd like to see around the town's green spaces in Station Road, Hitchcock Way, on Ladygrove and paths in south Didcot and Great Western Park
- give your ideas for exciting public art projects for Cow Lane and Edmonds Park
- discover what schools, sports and recreation and other community facilities are currently available and new facilities that will be provided in the future
- housing developers will be attending to provide information on what facilities will be built on their new developments over the next few years
- discover a wide range of healthy activities and groups there are for you to join in the local area

Didcot Gateway update

You may have seen the news articles on the [Didcot Gateway development](#).

South Oxfordshire District Council has made a decision to not progress the council office building project at Didcot Gateway in light of the government's plans to reorganise local authorities.

At the South Cabinet meeting earlier this month, members gave the green light for £10 million of funds that had originally been earmarked for the new building to be reallocated to buy new social housing. The reallocation of funds means the Didcot Gateway project has now formally been ceased. The planning permission remains in place for any future unitary council should the building be required.

We have clarified that the £2.2 million cost of Didcot Gateway which was quoted recently on the BBC included the demolition costs of Crowmarsh, rather than an electricity substation, so £1.9 million is the Gateway cost to date for South Oxfordshire District Council. There has been no cost to Vale on this development to date. Further details [are available in the report here](#).

Annual Canvass update

The councils are currently carrying out the electoral register annual canvass – that's the requirement to contact residents each year to ensure they check that their details on the register are up to date.

They have already sent yellow letters to 28,753 households whose details they either don't have, or they know are not up to date, asking residents to update their information.

Most households, whose details they do have, will shortly receive an email - this will ask residents to visit householdresponse.com/southandvale to either confirm 'no change' to the records, or to make changes online, if required.

The email will go out from Monday 8 September from elections@southandvale.gov.uk with the subject line "South & Vale District Councils - Annual Electoral Register Check" and will contain both council logos.

Give your views the councils' new Licensing Act Policy

The council are planning to make a few changes to the policy which determines how we make licensing decisions and how licensed premises can operate in our district. Our proposed updated Licensing Act Policy includes new references to: Martyn's Law, the Ask for Angela scheme and promoting initiatives for women and girls' safety; and updated guidance on staff training about safeguarding and evacuation and emergency procedures. Find out more and have your say via [our consultation page](#). Comments are open until 16 October.