

**Monday 13th October 2025**

Monthly Parish Update

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

Hello from Hayleigh and Debra

As we come into Autumn and the evenings draw in with the temperatures starting to drop, we seem to be entering a busy period for council business.

In September, Hayleigh was lucky enough to visit Wantage Leisure Centre in order to see the decarbonisation work that has been going on. Funded by the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund, the multi-million-pound construction projects to replace end-of-life gas boilers with solar panels and air source heat pumps at leisure centres in Wantage and Abingdon are helping Vale of White Horse District Council to reduce its overall carbon emissions. It was clear to see the major work that is involved when upgrading a leisure centre, compared to a home – it was impressive!

At Vale's cabinet meeting on 10th October, amongst other things, Vale's progress to Net Zero was discussed. You can find the [reports](#) from the meeting on the Vale website.

The Vale has cut its emissions by 12% since we made a commitment to net zero (in 2019), and by 45% since reporting began (2009). The Leisure Centres make up 39% of our overall greenhouse gas emissions, and so we would expect this to keep falling as the air source heat pumps come online. Unfortunately, waste collection makes up half of our overall greenhouse gas emissions. At this current time, this is much harder for us to decarbonise, as there are not yet large waste collection vehicles that can manage to do the trip from our waste vehicle depot to the places in our rural constituency, and back again. However, do look out for our electric food waste trucks, which can manage the journeys – and are in fact more reliable and better performing than their diesel counterparts.

The Government's proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which aims to replace the existing two-tier council system in areas like Oxfordshire with unitary authorities, will hamper the council from making longer term financial commitments. Decisions to invest in decarbonisation works on the council's estate are likely to be postponed until the LGR is complete.

On 18th September, the councils hosted an event at the District Community Centre on Great Western Park for members of the public to hear about latest news and updates on the health, wellbeing, sport and leisure projects and developments in Didcot. Hayleigh attended the event, and was pleased to hear about the wayfinding project and an art installation at Cow Lane bridge, as well as developer Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon sharing plans for their upcoming building on Valley Park.

In previous updates over the past couple of years, you will have seen updates about the preparation of Vale and South's Joint Local Plan. In recent months, this has been at the "examination stage". A couple of weeks ago, the planning inspectorate (a national body) wrote to the councils and asked them to withdraw the plan. This is extremely disappointing, due to the years of work put into them and brilliant policies that were contained within – notably on environmental standards and social housing numbers. For the councils' response, head to the website <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/planning/councils-to-take-positive-steps-to-represent-communities-despite-concerns-with-inspectors-local-plan-decision/>

The councils are still exploring the options for the next steps and how we can make the most of the evidence base that was put together over the past few years, to develop our local planning policies. So watch this space.

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).

Local News

Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership are offering a host of free, tailored support to develop your social enterprise this Autumn/Winter 2025.

- **[1:1 social business development support:](#)** Meet a business advisor to support you with whatever stage or development needs you have.
- **[Free Training workshops:](#)** A series of training sessions to help you get your social enterprise up and running.
- **Peer support groups:** A series of facilitated peer support groups for social entrepreneurs. By sharing real experience and challenges with others who understand the journey you are on you will broaden your knowledge, extend your thinking and be resourced in a supportive and confidential group
 - [Food social enterprise peer group](#)
 - [Community hubs/assets peer group](#)
 - Creative social businesses peer group - please email makena@osep.org.uk

Find out more [on our website](#), or email us to find out more!

This programme is funded from the UKSPF fund by South & Vale District Council and Oxford City Council. Please note, this programme can only support businesses or sole traders operating in these areas.

Valley Park applications

With Valley Park being such a large development, the developers will submit "Reserved Matters" planning applications for each parcel of homes, and for other bits of infrastructure delivery. The below are the ones that are live in the system today including the notes from the planning officers. A number of them may still be open for comments by the public as well.

Applications Under Consideration

P24/V1099/RM – seeks approval for the road leading south from the Science Bridge roundabout and connecting to that part of the road associated with application P24/V0549/RM which is mentioned below, and for green corridors including Cow Lane and the Central Stream.

This application has progressed significantly, and we are hoping to be able to determine the application within the next week. The proposed watercourse crossings are now considered acceptable from an ecology perspective, however there are still some technical matters to be resolved with OCC highways authority. This is the only matter outstanding with this application and the developers are working closely with OCC to get this resolved as soon as possible.

P24/V1369/SOB – request for DoV

Proposed changes to public art delivery and proposed changes to sports provision in line with what Boundary Park Trust would like delivered, and also looking to add in that any future S73 application does not require a DoV. They are also proposing to make amendments to the school specification and the trigger by which the western access is delivered, and these have been agreed with OCC. The extra care and AH hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

changes are no longer being sought. The legal agreement is currently in draft form, with discussions ongoing.

P24/V2560/RM - Infrastructure phase Bund 1, comprising the installation of Noise Bund 1 and associated infrastructure and landscaping

Amendments have been submitted and these are considered acceptable.

P25/V0563/RM – seeks approval of 397 dwellings on Phase 3P

Amended plans were received on 24 July and further consultation carried out. There are still some outstanding matters and further amendments are required to address these. An extension of time has been agreed until 28 November 2025.

P25/V0873/RM – seeks approval of 105 dwellings on Phase 2Tc (Lavender Walk)

Amended plans are required and these are expected to be submitted in a few weeks' time. An extension of time will need to be agreed to enable sufficient time for these to be considered, along with any further consultation.

P25/V0874/RM – seeks approval of 102 dwellings on Phase 2Ta (Jasmine Fields)

Amended plans are required and these are expected to be submitted in a few weeks' time. An extension of time will need to be agreed to enable sufficient time for these to be considered, along with any further consultation.

P25/V0875/RM – seeks approval of the infrastructure surrounding Phase 6T (Clover Meadow) including spine road; noise bund with associated fence; landscaping; open space, including paths, LEAP and SuDS attenuation basin; infrastructure and works.

Amended plans are required and these are expected to be submitted in October. An extension of time has been agreed until 17 October, however it is likely that this will need to be extended further to enable sufficient time for the amendments to be considered, along with any further consultation. This application is being assessed alongside application P25/V0879/RM for the housing.

P25/V0879/RM – seeks approval for 225 dwellings on Phase 6T

Amended plans are required and these are expected to be submitted in October. An extension of time has been agreed until 17 October, however it is likely that this will need to be extended further to enable sufficient time for the amendments to be considered, along with any further consultation. This application will be assessed alongside application P25/V0875/RM for the infrastructure surrounding the parcel.

P25/V1191/RM – seeks approval for 172 dwellings on phase 3Pa and 3Pb

This is Persimmon Phase 3Pa and 3Pb. The consultation process has highlighted matters to be addressed, and therefore amendments to the application will likely be needed. Still awaiting comments from OCC highways authority to be able to fully assess the application.

Climate & Environment News

[Remembering South and Vale's New Waste Services Number is as easy as 123](#)

Residents in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse should use a new number for district council waste and recycling enquiries: 01235 422 123

[New garden waste permit scheme a big success thanks to residents' support](#)

Residents in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse have embraced a new garden waste permit scheme this year – with an almost 5 per cent rise in collections from the previous year.

Now, 95 per cent of all garden waste customers can now be reached by email, compared to 64 per cent the previous year, which means the Councils can also quickly keep them up to date with any known service changes.

Residents who have purchased a permit for the district council brown bin garden waste collection service in South Oxfordshire or the Vale of White Horse can have extra garden waste collected for free, on their normal scheduled collection day only, between 27 October and 7 November.

Permit holders can put out a maximum of four additional sacks of garden waste, per brown bin subscription, next to their brown bin.

For further details - <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/brown-bin-permit-holders-can-have-extra-garden-waste-collected-this-autumn/>

[Local groups to get £100,000 for climate and nature projects](#)

This is the fifth year we have offered the Climate Action Fund to groups across the Vale, and it's as popular as ever. It was once again oversubscribed. We have been very impressed by the quality and ingenuity of the proposals with people looking to tackle environmental issues.

In addition to a variety of ideas, we are also seeing abundant enthusiasm from all applicants to make improvements to their local areas to take action for the climate and to help build nature recovery.

One of the projects funded in our local area was in Blewbury for purchase of a cycling rack, pump, bike repair items, locks for visitors to the Style Acre Tea Room, to encourage active travel.

And those that the whole area benefits from are:

- Distribution of 1600 free, native Oxfordshire trees to households across the Vale of White Horse, creating an opportunity for people to engage with tree planting in their own gardens (International Tree Foundation)
- Introductory workshops to educate and support communities to transition to rooftop solar power (CPRE – The countryside charity Oxfordshire)
- Provision of energy assessments for up to six community organisations in the Vale (Low Carbon Hub)
- Water testing at 40 locations across the Ock river catchment and running of engagement events, production of communications and training volunteers (Thames21)
- Local talks and engagement on climate adaptation to support community resilience in the face of increased risk of flooding across the district (Future Flood Resilience Group)

[Street cleansing survey](#)

The council is inviting Town and Parish Councils to [complete this survey](#) to tell us how street cleansing happens locally and how we can improve litter picking and cleanliness in your area.

The information you provide will help us understand how street cleansing undertaken at local level fits with district council responsibilities.

Council News

[Wantage community hospital refurbishment ready to start following successful funding bid](#)

Following a successful bid to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund administered by Vale of White Horse District Council, work is now ready to start on refurbishing the ground floor of Wantage Community Hospital.

[Food and Warmth Grant Scheme launched to support residents this winter](#)

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have launched a Food and Warmth Grant Scheme to help local organisations who are directly supporting residents struggling with the rising cost of living. The scheme will distribute grants to local not-for-profit organisations delivering projects that improve access to food and help people keep their homes warm. Grants are available for a six-week application window with the scheme closing for applications midday 6 November 2025. Local groups can apply for up to £2,000 if un-constituted, £2,000–£5,000 if constituted, and up to £10,000 for collaborations between three or more not-for-profit organisations led by a constituted group.

[Enjoy an action-packed half-term across South Oxfordshire and the Vale](#)

From theatre shows and craft workshops to outdoor adventure challenges and family fun days – there's something for everyone this October half-term! Families across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse can look forward to an exciting week of free and low-cost activities from 25 October to 1 November. Free and low-cost outdoor activities, from 25 October to 1 November.

For more information, including details on how to reserve your place or book tickets, visit southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities

[Residents enjoy discovering latest Didcot updates at community event](#)

Visitors to Didcot's community update event last week got to find out about the range of projects and developments taking place in the garden town.

Books take over Wantage this October!

Talks, workshops and performances will be taking place in Wantage for a full week as part of the Wantage Literary Festival.

Highlights include a free 'Playtime' performance introducing children to theatre, and TV personalities such as Strictly pro Janette Manrara and Sewing Bee judge Patrick Grant both discussing their recent book releases. History, mystery, or just plain literary, there's something on the shelf for everybody's tastes.

Saturday 25 October - Saturday 1 November.

Find out more on the [Beacon website](#).

Cornerstone Arts Centre is getting spooky!

Cornerstone Arts Centre invites you to embrace the "eerie" this November with two spine-tingling performances!

On Thursday 6 November, experience [Nosferatu on their big screen](#), as composer Chris Green brings Murnau's 1922 vampire classic to life with a haunting mix of live electronics and acoustic sounds.

Then, on Wednesday 12 November, [Bark Bark](#) blends puppetry, cameras, and diorama sets to tell a darkly funny, unsettling story from a dog's point of view. From acclaimed live-cinema company Buzzcut Productions (from Oxford), this Edinburgh Fringe hit is a must-see.

Book now on [the Cornerstone website](#).

Planning service update

Earlier this year, the councils carried out a major piece of planned essential maintenance work on their IT system. The work affected the availability of many of the council's online services. The majority of our online services returned to normal in July, however, our planning team has been impacted for a longer period and unfortunately, there is still a backlog of planning applications.