



WESTERN VALLEY *Voice*

— YOUR PARISH • YOUR COMMUNITY • YOUR VOICE —

THE NEWSLETTER OF WESTERN VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL

• Issue 001 • Summer 2026 •

- **A Lot of Bollards!**
Help us decide where they should go.
- **Could You Be Our Next Councillor?**
Just a few hours a month can make a big difference.
- **Shape Western Valley's Future**
Join our Neighbourhood Plan team.

Your voice helps shape
Western Valley, and
every great community
starts with a
conversation.



From left to right, Cllrs Clarke, Peacock, Humphries, Dearlove and Williams



— FROM THE — Chair's Desk

Hello, my name is Simon and I have been Chair of Western Valley Parish Council since the first meeting in 2023. I have lived in the area all my life, working in research reactors at AERE Harwell, then at the Tesco distribution centre, and later teaching at St Birinus. I am a member of the walking rugby team at Didcot rugby club, and I also study HEMA, historic European martial arts, which is sword fighting in 14th century medieval Italian style!

As the first level of local government, we are here to support the community where we can, trying to keep planning consistent and working with District and County councillors to keep residents up to date on infrastructure projects such as the HIF1 road scheme to connect the A34 to a new Thames crossing near Culham. We are also pushing developers and councils for issues such as the doctors surgery, adoption of roads and

Councillor Fact File

- Resident of Western Valley from new
- Keen Swordsman
- The first and only councillor elected at our very first election



amenities, and provision of allotments and play areas.

Our councillors have a wide range of experience, some have served on various councils at different levels and for some like myself, this is their first opportunity to get involved in local government.

Simon Peacock,
Chair 2026-2027



— LATEST DECISIONS OF THE — Council

Over the past few months, Western Valley Parish Council has been busy progressing a number of projects designed to improve life across our growing community.

One of the biggest developments is the launch of our new **Neighbourhood Planning Committee**, more on page 7. Alongside this, we've also established a **Bollards Working Group** – see page 5. Both groups will be seeking ideas and involvement from local residents over the coming months.

The Council has also agreed to produce this very newsletter— **Western Valley Voice** - to help keep residents informed about local decisions, community events and opportunities to get involved. Advertising from local businesses and organisations will help keep production costs as low as possible.

As always, our meetings are open to the public, and we'd love to hear your ideas about how we can continue making Western Valley an even better place to live.

As Western Valley continues to grow, councillors have approved submitting a request for an additional parish councillor to reflect the parish's increasing electorate, ensuring residents continue to be well represented in the years ahead.

The Council has continued to press for progress on local healthcare, writing jointly to Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, our Member of Parliament and the developers, seeking urgent decisions on the next phase of healthcare provision for the area.

In addition, the Council has adopted a range of updated governance policies and continued reviewing planning applications affecting the parish to ensure Western Valley's interests are represented as new development continues.



Make use of FixMyStreet using the link below to report issues to OCC as well.





— A LOT OF —

Bollards!



One issue we know has concerned many residents for some time is anti-social parking around the District Centre. Vehicles parking in unsuitable locations can create hazards for pedestrians, reduce visibility, obstruct access and make it more difficult for everyone to use safely.

To help address this, the Parish Council has established a Bollards Working Group, which recently held its inaugural meeting. The group has begun exploring options for introducing bollards in appropriate locations around the District Centre to discourage inconsiderate parking while maintaining safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and those with mobility needs.

However, we know the District Centre may not be the only area where bollards could make a positive difference, and that's where you can help.

If there are locations elsewhere in Western Valley where you believe carefully placed bollards could improve safety, protect green spaces, prevent pavement parking or reduce vehicle damage, we'd love to hear from you, by emailing the Clerk, or following the link:



Local knowledge is invaluable in helping us identify areas of concern and ensuring any future proposals reflect the experiences of those who live here.

The Bollards Working Group is still in its early stages, but we're committed to working with residents to find practical, proportionate solutions that improve our shared spaces.

Together, we can help make Western Valley safer, more accessible and more welcoming for everyone.



— COULD YOU BE OUR NEXT —

Councillor?



Western Valley is growing quickly, and there's never been a more exciting time to help shape its future. We currently have a vacancy on the Parish Council and are looking to co-opt an enthusiastic resident who cares about their community and wants to make a real difference.

You don't need any previous experience in local government. If you can listen, work as part of a team and are passionate about making Western Valley an even better place to live, we'd love to hear from you. Full training and support are available, and you'll be joining a friendly group of councillors committed to improving our parish.

As a parish councillor, you'll help make decisions that affect everyday life in Western Valley. From supporting community events to influencing planning matters, enhancing road safety and helping deliver local projects, your ideas and local knowledge can have a lasting impact.

Being a councillor is also a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, develop new skills and give something back to your community. Most councillors spend just a few hours each month attending meetings and reading papers, making it a rewarding role that can fit alongside work, family and other commitments.



— WOULD YOU LIKE TO —
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IN OUR NEXT EDITION?

 **AUTUMN EDITION - OUT IN OCTOBER** 

We welcome adverts from:



CHARITIES



CLUBS & GROUPS



LOCAL BUSINESSES



LOCAL FOCUS:
Businesses within
1 mile of the
parish boundary.

If you've ever found yourself saying, "Someone should do something about that," this is your opportunity to be part of the solution.



SHAPE Western Valley's *Future*



Western Valley is preparing to create a **Neighbourhood Plan**, and we'd love you to be part of it.

A Neighbourhood Plan gives our community the opportunity to help shape how Western Valley develops over the coming years. It can protect valued green spaces, support local facilities and businesses, and help ensure future growth reflects what matters most to residents.

One of the most important requirements of a Neighbourhood Plan is community engagement. A successful plan isn't written by the Parish Council alone - it must be developed with the community, for the community. That's why we're inviting residents, business owners and representatives from local organisations to join our Neighbourhood Plan Committee.

You don't need any planning experience. What matters most is your local knowledge, your ideas and your willingness to listen to others. We'll

provide support and guidance throughout the process.

By joining the committee, you'll help organise community events, gather residents' views, discuss local priorities and ensure as many voices as possible are heard before any decisions are made.

Whether you were one of our original residents or have only recently moved to Western Valley, your perspective is valuable. The decisions we make now will help shape our parish for years to come.

If you'd like to play a part in creating Western Valley's future, we'd be delighted to hear from you, contact details on the back page.



WE'D LOVE TO RECEIVE

ARTICLES

FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

FOR OUR AUTUMN EDITION - OUT IN OCTOBER

Do you run a club, charity, community group or local organisation?
We'd love to share your news, achievements and upcoming events with the whole parish.



SHARE YOUR
NEWS



PROMOTE
EVENTS



CELEBRATE
ACHIEVEMENTS



REACH MORE
RESIDENTS



HELP KEEP OUR
COMMUNITY CONNECTED

Your article could inform,
inspire and bring people
together.



Send your articles and images to:
Clerk@WesternValleyParish.gov.uk



Deadline for the
Autumn Edition:
15 SEPTEMBER



Visit our website
WesternValleyParish.gov.uk
for more information

Issue 001

Summer 2026

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I'm Back! As many of you will know, I gave birth to my baby girl in mid-December, and have been on maternity leave since. I have recently returned to my role as a ward councillor.

Planning Regulations Last week, I attended a briefing from the Vale Planning Officers about the new planning regulations. As of October, new government legislation will mean changes to the National Scheme of Delegation. Vale are still working through the details of the changes but in broad terms, it will mean less decisions are made by councillors and more by officers.

Trouble with missed bins? I've received a few emails about this in past few weeks, so this is a reminder that if your bin is missed, you should report it missed by 6pm the following day. by contacting admin.vale@biffa.co.uk or 01235 422123. Biffa should return within a couple of days to collect. If not, Vale Council can follow up with Biffa – as they are not completing their obligation. Biffa can only be chased if the missed bin has been reported. Please

remember to put them out before 6am on Bin Day!

Local Government Reorganisation we have a two tier system – District Council dealing with things like planning and bins, and County dealing with others like social care and roads. The Secretary of State's decision on Local Government Reorganisation is Oxfordshire will have three unitary councils. These will be Greater Oxford, Ridgeway and Northern Oxfordshire. Across Oxfordshire, this was the proposal with the least support – it was proposed by just Oxford City Council. You can read more on their website 3councils.org. The new councils are expected to come into force on 1st April 2028, with elections for these new councils expected in May 2027.

I recognise that there have been issues with the Council's Land Charge system, but the new system should be up and running now, with a backlog to clear.

For direct responses
hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne



The next few months are likely to be a significant period for Oxfordshire, with much of the council's attention focused on Local Government Reorganisation. By the time you read this, we should know the Government's preferred model for the future structure of local government in the county. Whatever the outcome, much of the council's work will then turn to planning for implementation. I remain concerned about the proposed Greater Oxford unitary authority, which I believe would be the worst outcome for residents. It would require the breakup of existing Adult and Children's Services, creating unnecessary disruption, and forecasting shows it won't be financially viable, regardless of the savings councils are able to make over the next two years.

I currently serve as Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care. The portfolio covers services for older people, disabled adults, unpaid carers, homelessness and mental health. Like councils across the country, Oxfordshire faces

significant financial pressures and must plan for around £50 million of savings as demand rises while funding reduces. Sadly, this does mean that we will need to make cuts, but I will continue to make the case for protecting frontline services and supporting our most vulnerable residents. We are taking an approach of small savings across all services, which will avoid having to cut whole community-focussed non-statutory programmes.

Closer to home, there is some positive news on infrastructure and road safety. We expect to see progress on long-awaited crossing schemes in both Harwell and Blewbury before the end of the year. In addition, drainage repairs have now been completed at the top of Frank Williams Way, and I am hopeful this will significantly reduce flooding problems this winter.

If there is a local issue I may be able to help with, please do get in touch on:
rebekah.fletcher@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Cllr Bekah Fletcher



FROM OUR

Member of Parliament

We recently wrote to our MP, Olly Glover about the lack of GP facilities in the Parish and to ask for support and information on *when* they would be delivered.

We have now received a response:

Olly Glover MP: Please be assured that the delivery of this surgery is one of my key priorities across the constituency and one that I track very closely. I have regular meetings with the ICB with this being the sole item on the agenda (I do not want to dilute focus away from it). I also raised the stalled progress with the Secretary of State in Parliament in October of last year which I do think helped.

In terms of precise details as to the current status of the project, my understanding is that the Vale of White Horse District Council is currently finalising the land transfer, with both Taylor Wimpey and the Council targeting completion within a matter of weeks.

The Integrated Care Board has concluded its Expression of Interest exercise on behalf of Woodlands Medical Centre to identify an alternative delivery partner and Woodlands has appointed a new developer, Apsley Henley Med Ltd, to take this forward.

Whilst I am aware of the potential for further setbacks, having seen so many along the way, I do feel that there is renewed momentum behind the scheme.

I think it is fair to say that all concerned fully recognise the pressure on existing GP services and the expectations of residents that appropriate healthcare provision should follow development. I will continue to work closely with the Integrated Care Board, the District Council and other stakeholders to press for progress as quickly as possible.



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IN OUR NEXT

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LOCAL FOCUS:

We are prioritising businesses based within **1 mile** of the parish boundary.

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Upcoming Council Meetings:

- 10th September
- 12th November (Budget setting)
- 14th January 2027
- 11th March 2027

Annual Meeting of the Parish

- 11th March 2027

Planning Meetings are the fourth Thursday of the month, if there are any applications to discuss

- 27th August
- 24th September
- 22nd October.

The Neighbourhood Plan Committee meet on the first Monday of the month.

- 3rd August
- 7th September
- 5th October



You are welcome to call, write to or email the Council at any time.

Clerk@WesternValleyParish.gov.uk

07424 402938

Post:

PO Box 4311
Reading
RG8 1DD

Join our mailing list on the front page of our website here:

