

**Sunday 19th July, 2026**

Monthly Update

Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne*Vale of White Horse District Council*

I'm back

As many of you will know, I gave birth to my baby girl in mid December, a little earlier than expected and have been on maternity leave since. I have recently returned to my role as a ward councillor, representing Blewbury, Harwell, Chilton, Upton, Valley Park and Great Western Park.

Heatwave

You don't need me to tell you that recent heatwaves have been challenging, and at the most recent Vale council meeting, I asked a question to find out how we are supporting affected residents, whether signposting to cool spaces, or providing funding to community spaces to become more resilient. The science tells us that weather events like those we've seen in recent weeks are here to stay, so I'm keen that as a council, we are doing what we can to prepare for that, and protect people from the effects, where we can. Head to the Vale website, to the council meeting minutes to find the full question and answer.

Planning Regulations

Last week, I attended a briefing from the Vale Planning Officers about the new planning regulations. As of October this year, new government legislation will mean significant changes to the National Scheme of Delegation. As a council, we are still working through the details of the changes we will have to make. In broad terms, it will mean less decisions are made by councillors and more by officers. To be clear, the officers already make a large proportion of the decisions around planning, using both national and local policies. Today, ward councillors, such as myself, have the power to "call in" a planning application, so that councillors can review the evidence and make the decision. The new rules from the government, will mean these powers will be taken away and planning applications that can be decided by the planning committee will need to meet certain criteria – they must be "major" applications, and pass "gateway tests". More guidance will come out as we approach the deadline, and training will be offered to Town and Parish councillors.

Trouble with missed bins?

I've received a few emails about missed bin collections these past few weeks, so I'll use this as a reminder to everyone that if your bin is missed, you should report it missed by 6pm the following day. You can do this by filling in this form https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/formcall.jsp?F=MISSED_BINS or by emailing admin.vale@biffa.co.uk or by calling 01235 422123. Then, Biffa should return within a couple of days to collect it. If they do not, then Vale Council can follow that up with Biffa – as they are not completing their obligation. But note that, unless it is reported as missed, we can't chase Biffa for it.

Local Government Reorganisation

What is it? Here in Oxfordshire, we have a two tier system – District councils and councillors deal with certain matters (like planning and bins) whilst the County deals with others (like social care and roads). The government would like to get rid of this, and have everyone under a Unitary system, just one council. Whilst this would be easier from the residents' perspective, only needing to contact one council – the question is how to set up the new councils? What should the geography be? Virtually hot off the press as I write this is the Secretary of State's decision on Local Government Reorganisation. Announced on the last day of Parliament, before the summer recess, at virtually the last moment, Steve Reed has said that our area will have three unitary councils. These will be Greater Oxford, Ridgeway and Northern Oxfordshire. The decision is surprising to me, as across Oxfordshire, this was the proposal with the least support – it was proposed by just one of our 6 councils, Oxford City Council. You can read more on their website [3councils.org](https://www.3councils.org)

The new councils are expected to come into force on 1st April 2028, a day known as vesting day. Before then, the existing councils will operate as normal, performing the usual duties. There are expected to be elections for this council in May 2027, and the councillors elected at that point will be the ones making decisions about how the new council will operate. I will continue to share updates on this matter, but as always let me know any questions you have.

I write these updates to keep you updated on what I am up to, what is happening at the District Council and other relevant local matters.

You can follow me and the Vale of White Horse District Council on facebook:

www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh & www.facebook.com/whitehorsedc

The best way to get a direct response is to email me and my ward colleague, Cllr Debra Dewhurst.

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Local News

Great Western Park GP surgery

Just before I went on maternity leave, at the end of 2025, the Integrated Care Board announced that they would no longer be working with the appointed developer, due to feedback from the District Valuer about value for money. Since then, the ICB have appointed a new developer. Whilst this is a positive step forwards, there will be some work behind the scenes to change everything over. I will continue to work with both the council officers and our local MP, Olly Glover, to push the ICB to deliver this much needed service.

Valley Park

The housing estate next to Great Western Park is growing by the day, with people moving in, and a Primary School being built. I have periodic meetings with the Vale planning officers looking at the submitted applications from the developers, and am able to raise any concerns or queries with them – please let me know.

Current “Reserved Matter” applications in the system are listed below, and these generally relate to parcels of homes, or pieces of infrastructure.

Applications Decided and Approved

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.

This application was approved on 22 May 2026.

P25/V0879/RM – seeks approval for 227 dwellings on Phase 6T

This application was approved on 9 June 2026.

New Applications Received

P26/V1626/RM – seeks approval for a small section of the spine road only

The application is currently out for consultation until 22 July 2026.

Applications Under Consideration

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

Awaiting amendments from the applicant.

Beat the heat in the Vale

A guide to services and advice from the council, as well as local and national organisations, to help during the summer months.

Community organisations get a boost from the White Horse Community Lottery

Community organisations across the Vale of White Horse will receive more than £8,000 this year through the White Horse Community Lottery’s community fund. If you would like to support the fund, you can buy a lottery ticket here - www.whitehorselottery.co.uk/support/whitehorse

Cost of Living Roadshows

The council is offering help and support to anyone struggling with cost of living.

The next stop is:

- **Tuesday 11 August**, 11am to 1pm at Didcot Baptist Church, 43 Wantage Road, Didcot, OX11 0BS

You don't need to book - just drop in and speak to the team.

For more information, visit our Community Hub webpage. [South/Vale](#)

Climate & Environment News

Oxfordshire moves forward with programme to support residents without private parking to switch to EVs

Over the next two years, Oxfordshire residents will benefit from the largest installation of public electric vehicle (EV) charging points ever seen in the county following the award of two charge point operator (CPO) contracts. These two companies will work together with Oxfordshire's councils to create a reliable, easy-to-use, contactless EV charging network spanning the county. This will give more people the opportunity to switch to an EV – regardless of where they live or their parking situation – to improve Oxfordshire's environment and air quality.

Wantage Leisure Centre is fit for the future

Wantage Leisure Centre is running on renewable energy following the completion of a multi-million-pound energy efficiency programme which installed air source heat pumps, solar panels and extensive insulation.

When the work at both leisure centres is finished, the council has calculated that its overall carbon emissions should be reduced by more than 25 per cent.

Council News

Full Council meetings

The Vale of White Horse District Council held meetings in May, June and July. May was the Annual General Meeting of the Council, in which we re-elected our Chair and Vice Chair of the council. In addition to this the council passed motions, proposed by the Liberal Democrats, relating to the Protection of Chalk Streams and to request targeted consultations on the issues surrounding the proposed SESRO or "White Horse Reservoir".

In June, the council held a special meeting to consider our next Joint Local Plan. Opposition members brought forward a motion relating to Household Recycling Centres that was amended and approved.

In July, one of the motions brought forward by members was in relation to the EHRC Equality Act Code of Conduct, during which the council reaffirmed its commitment to value, respect, welcome and create a safe environment for transgender and non-binary residents, staff, and visitors to access essential services and public spaces.

I asked a question around support for residents particularly vulnerable ones, due to the recent heatwaves. I was assured that the council will further look at ways to signpost support, such as cool spaces, or pots of available funding. To see the full response - [\(Public Pack\)Written responses to questions Agenda Supplement for Council, 15/07/2026 17:30](#)

To see the full agendas and minutes for all the meetings, please head to the website.

[Browse meetings - Council](#)

New rates support approved for Vale pubs and rural businesses

Pubs and essential rural businesses across the Vale of White Horse are set to receive extra support following the approval of a new one-off discretionary business rates relief scheme for 2026/27

Joint statement from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on local devolution

The leaders of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have reaffirmed their commitment to working constructively and collaboratively with all partners and the government on discussions around a new strategic authority that would cover the Thames Valley

Councils are encouraged by the results of their tenants' satisfaction survey

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have carried out a satisfaction survey among their tenants for the first time since they re-registered as social housing providers and the results are encouraging.

Park Yoga proves a hit with record numbers rolling out their mats

Hundreds of people across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse are rolling out their yoga mats and making the most of their local green spaces, with this year's Park Yoga sessions already attracting record numbers.

Bin days staying the same, but collection times may change across South Oxfordshire and the Vale

Residents across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are being reminded to put their bins out by 6am on their scheduled collection day, ahead of route changes starting later this month.

Free and low-cost family fun all summer long

Families can look forward to an action-packed summer with six weeks of free and low-cost activities taking place across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. It has something for everyone, from skateboarding and cricket to family fun days, outdoor adventures and wellbeing activities. Most activities are free or low cost, although some require advance booking. For the full programme, including dates, venues and booking information, visit southandvale.gov.uk/holidayactivities.

Land Charges system launched following major upgrade

The new Land Charges system will launch on Monday 13 July, following final testing to ensure the system is working correctly and returning accurate searches. This final stage has been essential because these searches are relied upon for important property decisions, and inaccurate information could cause significant problems for those using the service and potentially create legal liability for the council.

The priority now is to reduce the impact of the disruption. Due to the downtime, there will be a backlog of searches to process, and the council are putting additional resources in place to work through outstanding requests as quickly as possible and mitigate any further delays.

If you have already submitted a search request by email, please do not submit the same request again through the new portal. Existing requests are already recorded and will be processed. Anyone wishing to use the new system will need to register for an account.