

District Councillors Report to Parish Councils

Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

March 2021

Vale of White Horse District Council

The Vale Communications Team continued to provide Town and Parish Councils with regular updates regarding Covid. The good news is that we now have a four-step roadmap that will see current restrictions being lifted over the coming months.

As previously reported Vale staff continue to work from home. Although this is not ideal they would appreciate it if any communications are by Email rather than telephone.

The Vale has set up a Covid-19 symptom free testing programme at The Beacon in Wantage. This facility will provide rapid testing for public facing workers and volunteers who are not displaying symptoms. For further information please go to the Vale website-www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee – the next meeting is now scheduled for 19 April. Agenda details will be published on the Vale website one week before the meeting.

Environment - The Vale along with South Oxfordshire District Council have helped to raise more than £240,000 for great crested newt habitats. Over the past three years funds have been raised through an ongoing and innovative conservation scheme to protect the newts which are a European protected species.

A new partnership has been set up between Oxfordshire Greentech and the Vale and South Oxfordshire District Councils. The aim is to assist in helping the districts to become carbon neutral.

The County Council is asking for people to comment on the draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. The consultation ends on 29 March details may be found on OCC's website current consultations. The plan sets out a vision and will contribute to developing a zero economy and improve the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire residents.

Garden Waste – The suspension of the garden waste service caused significant concern throughout the Vale. The service resumed on 15 February and the Vale contractor Biffa is confident that it will meet its contractual agreement of 20 collections per annum.

Civil Parking Enforcement – Following the agreement of all Councils involved the County Council is awaiting confirmation from Government of the delegation powers that will enable the new arrangements to commence later this year.

Planning – Since Christmas there has been a number of applications submitted to the Vale from within the Watchfield & Shrivenham Ward. Decisions are still awaited on two applications that will be called into Committee for consideration should they be recommended for approval.

The application to build four dwellings at the rear of April Cottage in Stallpits Road was considered by the Planning Committee on 11 February. It was very disappointing that the application was approved but there were additional conditions attached to the approval which will need to be discharged before any works can commence.

Both Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee publicise their work programmes on the Vale website. To access the programmes go to www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk and enter work programmes in the search box.

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 9 March when it will discuss a proposal to consider the preparation and production of a joint local plan with South Oxfordshire District Council. Any recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee will be considered by the Cabinet which is due to meet on 17 March and will be presented to full Council on 24 March.

Full Council meeting – Full Council met virtually on Wednesday 10 February. This meeting considered the budget and set the Council Tax for 2021/22. The motion regarding the 20 is plenty was debated and approved unanimously. It is hoped that over the coming years more and more roads in both urban and rural areas will benefit from a reduction in speed limits. The minutes of the meeting will be published on the Vale website in due course.

Census – the 2021 Census 21 March – This Census is the first to be primarily online. Households will receive a letter from the Office of National Statistics with an access code for online completion of a questionnaire. Paper copies will be available on request for those that need them.

Community Engagement – Community groups and sporting organisations in Wantage, Grove and Faringdon are to be asked to help identify how millions of £106 funding raised from housing developers can be spent in their local areas. By speaking with the community the Vale hopes to get an up to date picture of current leisure provision and identify alternative local need. The Council has appointed an independent consultant Strategic Leisure Ltd to engage with a variety of stakeholders over the coming weeks.

Shrivenham Sports Pavilion – Following a lengthy process the Vale approved the release of £106 funds to help build a brand new sports pavilion in the Recreation Ground. The money comes from the agreements made with the various developers of the new homes in the village. All being well construction will start after Easter.

Swindon Borough Council – New Eastern Villages – Work continues on the Southern Connector Road and all other road improvements that form part of the infrastructure to support the NEV. The distribution centres at Symmetry Park are well

on the way to being completed. OCC Officers are due to meet with Swindon BC Officers in March to discuss the impact that the road works will have on the A420 as well as the long-term disruption which will be created as the NEV construction begins.

Although we don't hold surgeries we are always available to deal with any issues.

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