

Vale of White Horse District Councillors' Report

Katherine Foxhall and Viral Patel
Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

May 2023

It is with great pleasure that we share with you our first report as District Councillors for Watchfield and Shrivenham ward. It has been great to meet so many of the parish council members during the annual meetings in May. Thank you all for the kind welcome and information about the priorities and issues in your areas, and we look forward to getting involved as we settle in to our roles.

Our plan is to submit a ward report monthly, in addition to any specific work that comes up in the parishes. Please do let us know what information you would find most helpful for us to include.

Ward Roundup

We have been busy with the Council's induction programme, the allocation of committee places, and training sessions. This has particularly included the planning process. Katherine will take a role as Nature Recovery Champion for the District, and a place on the Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee, while Viral will be on the District's Joint Staff Committee.

During May we have begun to follow up several questions and issues from parishes and residents that came up both during the election campaign and subsequently. These include concerns about noise from holiday rentals, planning enforcement, existing and new large planning applications which Viral has been focusing much of his councillor time on. We are also looking at some possibly abandoned vehicles in residents' parking. Katherine spent several days working with local volunteers, District Council staff and the Environment Agency on a pollution incident from a construction site, and we will continue to keep an eye on the site.

It is worth being aware that any member of the public can report a pollution incident directly to the EA using their 24hr hotline: <https://www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident>.

District Council News

Local Elections

Following the local elections on 4 May, Vale District Council now has 34 Liberal Democrat councillors with our group of 4 Green Party councillors in opposition. While we are confident that the Council's general direction of travel is good, we take seriously the need to hold the council to account; in that context Katherine will chair Vale's Scrutiny Committee, and co-chair the Joint Scrutiny Committee with South Oxfordshire District Council.

There has been a great deal of concern about the effect of introducing a Voter ID requirement. Please do email any feedback to correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk or write to Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2 Marsham St, London, SW1P 4DF.

Full election results for Vale are available at: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/elections>

Climate Action Fund Now Open

The Vale of White Horse's Climate Action Fund provides grants of up to £5,000 for climate-related community projects in the district. The Fund has opened again for applications from town and parish councils and local groups who have proposals which aim to tackle climate change.

There is £100,000 available – double the amount previously available for those applying for grants. The fund will be open for applications until 14 July.

For more information: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/climate-emergency/100000-now-available-for-community-climate-projects-in-vale/>

Financial Support for Food Banks & Community Larders

To help support the voluntary food network South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils are inviting community food groups to apply for a grant of £2,500 for essential supplies.

The grants can be used to help pay for a variety of expenses including food, additional storage and energy bills.

More information: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/uncategorised/council-grants-now-available-for-food-banks-and-community-larders/>

Miscellaneous

Westmill Solar Power Conference

WESET are hosting a free one-day conference on 'Solar Power, Farming And Nature: Maximising The Benefits' at Westmill on Friday 9th June 10:30am-4:30pm, and an Open Day on Saturday 10th June, 1.30-5.30pm. For more information and to register see: <https://www.weset.org/visit/specialevents/>.

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