

## District Councillors Report to Parish Councils

### Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

Late March 2022

#### Vale of White Horse District Council

**Covid** – Infection rates have increased in both the Vale and Swindon since the easing of restrictions. An additional vaccination programme has been announced for the over 75's and vulnerable people. We advise residents to continue to follow the guidance and take care.

**Community Hub** – Following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Spring Statement it is anticipated that the Vale's Community Hub Team will oversee a new scheme to help those residents who are in financial difficulties with the increasing costs of living. Firm details will be published asap on the Vale's website. [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

**Rebate to help with energy bills** – Most households in Council Tax Bands A-D will be eligible for the rebate. The Vale is putting arrangements in place to make a separate payment asap. If usual payment is made by Direct Debit then the £150 will be paid into their bank account. Payment will hopefully start by the end of April. If not on Direct Debit the Vale will need to write to the household to confirm bank details and this process will take longer. The Vale requests that residents **do not contact them to chase the payment.**

**Ukraine** – The Vale like most local authorities is extremely concerned about the conflict in Ukraine. The Vale will help in any way they can including resettling refugees. There are a number of organisations offering support including the British Red Cross, UNHCR refugee agency and UNICEF. Local groups are collecting essential items but cash is the much preferred option. Donations can be made via the Disasters Emergencies Committee. The DEC works with many charities and the Government will match fund up to £20m.

**Planning** – The number of planning applications for Ward villages continues to rise. Details by each Parish may be found on the Vale website.

Previously we have mentioned two controversial applications in Shrivenham. Both have attracted a great number of objections including from Oxfordshire County Council Highways and Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group. It had been hoped that both would have been determined by the end of March but this is now unlikely. Additional information for one of the sites has been submitted and therefore requires additional consultation. There is also a screening opinion request for a 52 hectare solar farm in Coleshill. This application is expected to be determined by then end of this month as to whether it requires an environmental assessment.

A proposal for a 64 bed care home facility in Shrivenham was the subject of a public exhibition on 18 March. This was an outline proposal and we await a formal planning application should it be forthcoming.

**CIL funding from Vale to OCC** – Funding has been released for a number of projects within the Vale. Locally funding has been agreed for traffic calming in Coleshill, Real Time Information units at Bus stops in Shrivenham and Watchfield, and a pedestrian refuge and footway on the A420 serving Fernham Road Little Coxwell.

**Council Meeting** – The full Council meeting was held on 16 February at Milton Park. The meeting was to approve the budget. An amendment to the budget was submitted which proposed to increase the Community Climate fund from £50,000 to £125,000. Reduce office accommodation costs on departure from Milton Park by utilising council owned property in order to save rental cost and to freeze council tax for the forthcoming financial year. The amendment was put to a vote and was lost. The budget as presented to the Council was approved.

**Climate Action Fund £50,000 available** – Local groups and Parish Councils can apply for up to £5,000 for individual projects. We encourage applying as £50,000 amongst local groups and 68 Parish Councils won't go far. Applications are open until noon on 25 April.

**Climate Emergency Advisory Committee** – The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Tuesday 5 April. The agenda includes the Environment Act , Water Resources South East consultation and the Corporate Plan-Performance Report for Quarter 3.

**Swindon CCG/Integrated Care Alliance** – The next meeting between the Vale (Simon and Elaine) and the Swindon representatives was scheduled for 29 March. Unfortunately this meeting was cancelled at the last minute by Swindon and a new date is yet to be agreed

**Electric Vehicles** – EV Charging points have been installed in Wantage, Abingdon and locally in Faringdon. There are 12 chargers in each car park and these are primarily to assist those who do not have access to home charging.

**New vehicle for waste collections** – In the next few weeks an electric waste truck nicknamed Glitterball will be used for recycling over a four- week trial period. Look out for Glitterball.

**Car Parking Changes and Charges** – From 4 April free car parking will reduce from 2 hours to 1 hour with the exception of Southampton Street in Faringdon which will remain at 2 hours in order to attract people to the town centre., New fees will apply if staying for more than 1 hour,. Other fees will increase by 40p. Example charges for Southampton Street up to 3 hours £1.90. For Gloucester Street up to 2 hours £1.50 up to 3 hours £1.80.

**Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee** – Elaine has recently been appointed to this Committee. This Committee is made up representatives from the County Council, District Council, Faringdon Town Council, OCC Highways and Thames Valley Police. Although Parishes tend to contact their County Councillor directly with any traffic issues Elaine can also raise matters and report back to Parish Councils.

**Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Consultation** - Elaine wrote to the Vale and requested that in the Vale's response the problems associated with the A420 be highlighted. Recognition of the impact that the New Eastern villages will have on this road and the importance of engagement with neighbouring authorities. These concerns have been included in the response.

### **Swindon Borough Council – New Eastern Villages**

Nothing changes with the road works in and around Swindon and particularly at the White Hart roundabout and Gablecross. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel. The new access to the A419 north is due to open on Friday 1 April. The traffic signals around the White Hart roundabout will not be in use until all works have been completed at Gablecross. Those works are due for completion by the end of April. In the meantime the cones and single file traffic on the A420 will continue.

As an aside Swindon Borough Council has received a planning application for the redevelopment of the former Honda site. The anticipated build time is over a ten (10) year period.

Swindon BC has also approved a planning application for 60 dwellings next to Wrag Barn Golf Club. These new dwellings will obviously have an impact on traffic using the B4000.

Although we don't normally hold surgeries we are always available to deal with any issues. However, following the success of recent Meet your Councillors events held in Shrivenham and Watchfield we will be arranging more in the future.

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