

# BLEWBURY PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Blewbury Parish Council meeting held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020 via an e-conference system.

In attendance: - Cllrs C Lakeland (CL/Chair), M Penington (MP), L Inglis (LI), V Humphries (VH), J Gibson (JG), M Jacobs (MJ), M Shayler (MS). Miss E Cooper (Clerk/EC), District Cllr H Gascoigne (HG) & County Cllr M Fox-Davies (MF-D)

1. Apologies for absence  
Cllrs P Kilroe, M Blythe
2. Declarations of interests relating to this meeting  
None declared.
3. County Councillor's report  
See Appendix A below.  
Cllr MF-D to see if any information is as yet available on dealing with Covid-19 in the winter.  
Cllr MF-D to obtain any information on the opening of Wantage/Grove station.  
Cllr MF-D confirmed that not all funding hoped for regarding active travel had been received by the CC. To request that next tranche will include villages.  
Cllr MF-D also to push more on PCs behalf for cycle paths/cycling.  
LI queried if Oxfordshire growth deal had been replaced by a 'delivery plan'? Cllrs MF-D & HG to obtain more detail on what has been signed up to.
4. District Councillor's report  
See Appendix C below. In answer to previous questions raised: -  
Cllr HG confirmed that 'low emission houses' were not currently government policy. However, the DC was working to get innovations written in to policies.  
Cllr HG stated the rebuilding of replacement offices for South and Vale in Crowmarsh was being questioned.  
Cllr HG stated that climate emergency initiatives were currently on hold.  
On the use of pesticides, the DC followed government guidelines. MJ to write to Emily Smith or climate leader on this subject.  
Cllr HG stated that she is seconding a motion for connecting villages via cycle paths & confirmed that the DC does have a cycling champion'.  
Cllr HG to find out if grants are available from the council for e-bikes.  
Clerk to send current planning consultation response form to HG, along with previous version.
5. Lengthman's report  
See Appendix A below
6. Open Forum  
No members of the public present.
7. Approval previous minutes  
The minutes of the BPC meeting 10.06.20 were approved by council.

## 8. Outstanding Actions from previous meetings and any matters arising

No.	Actions from July meeting	When
1.	MF-D & Clerk to work on BOAT via Arthur McEwan-James	ASAP
2.	Clerk to update Standing Orders & Financial Regulations, reformat & issue to all.	Sept meeting
3.	Clerk to request artwork for no parking sign from Kingdom Signs.	ASAP
4.	Risk assessment under review by council	ASAP
5.	Clerk to check if any cob wall funding remains.	Sept meeting
6.	MJ to write to Emily Smith or climate leader on the use of pesticides etc.	Sept meeting
7.	CL to propose month to review Neighbourhood Planning & Clerk to add to calendar.	Sept meeting
8.	MS to estimate cost of repairs to Blewbury end of Coffin Way & report back	Sept meeting

No.	Actions from June meeting	When
1.	DH to action repair of cemetery gate.	Actioned
3.	CL & JG to distribute draft Green Policy when available.	Actioned
5.	Clerk / CL to establish ownership of Curtoys path cob wall.	Actioned

No.	Actions from March 2020 meeting	When
4.	VH to look at remedial work required at KAP.	C'fwd until further notice
No.	Actions arising from February 2020 Meeting	When
6.	Clerk to work out Blewshed proportion of electricity usage & inform Blewshed for payment	O/S
13.	CL to explore alternative environmentally friendly electricity suppliers for the Clubhouse/Melland Room and Scout Hut.	O/S

## 9. Planning & Housing

### 9.1 To receive the planning committee report

See below.

JG requested that Neighbourhood Planning is reviewed once a year. CL to propose month & Clerk to add to calendar.

### 9.2 To approve responses to current consultations

No new planning consultations were received prior to the issue of the agenda. The council unanimously agreed to include the following consultation received since the agenda was issued.

P20/V1452/HH The Garden House, rear of Ashbrook House, Westbrook St, Blewbury  
Garage extension.

Deadline noon 25.7.20.

The council unanimously agreed no objections to this consultation.

### 9.3 To note planning permissions received during the month

P20/V1011/FUL Churn Farm, Bohams Road, Blewbury  
Planning permission granted 09.06.20

## 10. Finance & Administration

### 10.1 Update on CIL or S106 contributions and planned expenditure

No update this month.

### 10.2 Update on BPC internal audit progress

NOTE:- CC & DC reports available online.

BPC internal audit complete. The IAC letter confirming completion of the internal audit was received on 15.7.20.

- 10.3 Approve BPC audit papers, obtain signatures & return to external auditors  
 10.3.1 Annual Governance Statements were unanimously agreed by council  
 10.3.2 Accounting Statements were unanimously agreed by council  
 10.3.3 Council also agreed to the proposed date of the notice of public rights to be 9.7.20 and that the period of the notice would be from 13.7.20 to 21.8.20.  
 Clerk's note: - All audit related papers were signed by the chair and clerk on 9.7.20. Also papers sent to Moore Stephens 9.7.20.
- 10.4 Approve end of month reconciliations for Lloyds/Santander & Barclays banks  
 Sent in advance of the meeting to the Chair. Signed in person on 9.7.20.
- 10.5 Approve payments to be made under ancillary powers and within budgeted amounts as per the table of payments below. Council unanimously agreed to all payments.

<b>PAYEE</b>	<b>Description / Power to spend</b>	<b>Amount</b>
E Cooper / D Hollick	Clerk & Lengthman's salary and expenses for June (LGA1972 s112(2))	£1483.63
NEST	Clerk's pension DD June (LGPSR2013 (SI2013/2356))	£93.63
HMRC	PAYE Clerk & Lengthman payment June (LGA1972 s112(2))	£374.00
Biffa Waste Services Ltd	Waste services DD July (LGA1972 s137)	£110.16
BT	Clubhouse line rental DD July (LGA1972 s137(electricity))	£35.04
NIBRA signs Ltd	Speedwatch signs (paid 30.6.20, to be ratified)	£504.12
Whitehorse Horticulture	One cut of Churchyard, Pound & Playclose June (HA1980 S96)	£200.00
OALC	Councillor Fundamentals Course PK (LGA1972 s111)	£42.00
OCC	06/06/20 to 05/06/21 Annual Rent Land in grounds of Blewbury School (PHAAA1907 s76(1))	£210.08
PWLB	Loan repayment PW505556 3.7.20 (NLA1968 s3, PWLA1965 S2)	£3477.50
SLCC	The Clerk's Manual (paid to be ratified) (LGA1972 s111)	£52.30
C Lakeland	Speedwatch expenses	£272.48
BVHEMC	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter PO grant (LG(FP)A 1963 s5)	£300.00
The Sign Shed	Play Area Signs	£61.20
<b>Total</b>		<b>£7216.14</b>

<b>Major Receipts</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Santander	Balance to Lloyds following closure of account	£1273.87
<b>Total</b>		<b>£1273.87</b>

<b>Barclays Bank Payments</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
29.06.20	Ridge and Partners	£900.00
30.06.20	MD Group invoice 5	£75000.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>£75,900.00</b>

- 10.6 Agree any amendments to the following Council documents: -  
 10.6.1 Standing Orders (sent to council 4.6.20)  
 The council ratified the minor changes proposed. Clerk to apply formatting changes & issue to all.  
 10.6.2 Financial Regulations (sent to council 4.6.20)  
 The council ratified the minor changes proposed. Clerk to apply formatting changes & issue to all.  
 10.6.3 Risk Management (under review June 20)  
 This document is still under review by council.

11. Village hall refurbishment
 

A progress report was circulated prior to the meeting by CL. Following receipt of invoice5 from MD Group for £75000, the council was still expecting a VAT return of c£26000 and two further grants totaling £35000. Estimated completion of the refurbishment is end of July, with reopening in September. MD has requested additional funds, which has not been agreed, but is under discussion.
  
12. Recreation Ground / Clubhouse
  - 12.1 Update on the Tickers Folly Field recreation ground and car park
 

See Lengthman’s report (Appendix A).
  - 12.2 Update on the Clubhouse (inc. cricket pitch, Melland room & car park)
    - 12.2.1 Update on a new clubhouse parking sign
 

Council unanimously agreed to proceed with the no parking sign and associated work. Clerk to request artwork for the sign.
    - 12.2.2 The Chair remains in close contact with the CIC in monitoring works to be carried out to bring the building up to specification, prior to handover (s146 effective date 18.8.20). The CIC has an objective to use grant money for the benefit of the facility & it’s members. The council asked that CL raise the following with the CIC: -
      - Deep/full & proper clean throughout the interior
      - Painting inside & out
      - Any dilapidations to be rectified
  
13. Risk Management update
  - 13.1 Update on village play spaces (TFF / KAP) relating to risk
 

Play areas were risk assessed, reopened on 6.7.20 and new signage installed.
  - 13.2 Any other updates on Management of Risk
 

Risk assessment policy under review by council.
  - 13.3 Update on Compliance
 

No update this month.
  
14. To receive an update on any issues relating to the Environment
  - 14.1 Update on the use of more environmentally friendly pesticides etc
 

MJ continues to investigate & will continue update council on findings/recommendations. Current recommendation – to avoid the use of anything which harms the environment.
  - 14.2 Update on a Green Spaces Policy for the village
 

Green Spaces Policy in draft form & will be issued/published in due course. The council unanimously agreed to ratify the policy.

MJ confirmed she had spoken with BVS & they were supportive of the policy.
  - 14.3 Update from Sustainable Blewbury
 

MJ had also spoken to Sustainable Blewbury (new chair – John Ogden) who were supportive of raising the use of pesticides policy with the DC.
  - 14.4 Update on the OGB & ONPA
 

This was covered in an earlier discussion with the CC.
  - 14.5 CL to write again to local farmers to encourage notification of ‘spraying’ & ask permission to quote useful information in the Blewbury Bulletin.
  
15. Update on any issues relating to Footways, Footpaths, rights of way and open spaces
  - 15.1 To formally agree & ratify the proposal to establish a Parish Council Cobb Wall Sub Committee (email 01.07.20 refers).
 

It was agreed and ratified that the members of the Cob Wall committee would be Lydia Inglis and

Vaughan Humphries. Clerk to check if any cob wall funds remain.

15.2 Update on Coffin Way / Cycle Path

MS confirmed that Coffin Way (Blewbury end) needed work on the path as the membrane was showing through. MS to estimate cost of repairs & report back.

15.3 Update on the work required on the Bridus Way footpath

JG confirmed that no work had taken place. Clerk & Cllr MF-D to chase Arthur McEwan-James for another update.

15.4 Update on any other issues relating to the above

No other issues.

16. Update on any issues relating to roads, road safety and public transport

16.1 To discuss the conditions of local roads and decide on any course of action

No issues this month.

16.2 To receive an update on the Blewbury Speed Watch group

The Chair reported that the TVP village signs were in place and all PPE & other equipment was either on order or had been received. PCSO involvement was required before any monitoring could take place.

However, this is proving difficult to arrange. The donation of £800 for this activity from the Rat Pack had been received in the PCs bank account on 02.7.20.

17. Correspondence – To consider items circulated/requiring a reply/consultation

None this month.

18. Dates of the next meetings of the Council

Payments & Planning meeting only on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 7.30pm via an e-conference system.

Full council meeting Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 7.30pm via an e-conference system.

The meeting finished at 9.25pm.

## **Appendix A**

### **LENGHTMAN'S REPORT - JUNE 2020**

Very busy month with grass cutting in all areas.

Footpaths are looking good but there are a few places where residents' hedges and shrubs are encroaching. Virtually daily visits to collect litter and empty rubbish bins at Tickers Folly Field, Car Parks and TFF Play Areas where there seem to be constant picnics and parties in this lovely weather with there being no school. There have been several fires and burnt grass due to BBQs and bonfires. Also some damage to skate ramp fencing, which I have repaired.

Some tree damage in the car park area where branches have just been ripped off.

Buildings and equipment are all in good order.

I will be doing a full safety check on the play areas at the beginning of July in preparation to opening them on or after Saturday 4th.

Materials have been obtained to repair the kissing gate at the cemetery which I will do ASAP.

David

## Appendix B

### REPORT TO BLEWBURY PARISH COUNCIL JULY 2020 FROM CLLR MIKE FOX-DAVIES

Over the past few weeks, we have been able to support the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions. This has meant residents have been able to visit their household waste recycling centres, schools have been able to accept more pupils, and town centres and high streets have been able to reopen.

On **4 July** much of the hospitality, culture and leisure sector will restart, albeit with social distancing in place. This will bring more challenges for many of our services. However planning for this is already well underway and we are confident we will be able to support this next phase of recovery.

#### **Libraries and registration offices**

We will be gradually reopening our libraries and registration offices during the coming weeks and months. We are planning a phased approach to the reopening of public buildings, with every precaution being taken to make sure this happens safely for our staff who will work in them and members of the public who visit them.

#### **Safety measures to support shoppers**

A host of safety measures are in place across Oxfordshire as non-essential shops continue to reopen safely. Government advice requires shops to display a poster in their entrance confirming they have read and implemented its "Five Steps to Safer Working Together". This includes carrying out a COVID-19 risk assessment and taking all reasonable steps to maintain a two-metre distance in the workplace.

In the public realm, people will notice signage to remind them to socially distance and changes such as increased pavement space and one-way systems for pedestrians on narrow streets. We have been working closely with Oxfordshire's five district councils and the city council to facilitate changes to the road network to help support our town centres to thrive once again.

#### **Oxfordshire County Council signs agreement for £218m with Homes England**

This sum of £218m (towards infrastructure costs of £234m) will deliver:

- Widening the A4130 from A34 Milton Interchange towards Didcot from single to dual carriageway;
- A new Science Bridge over the A4130, Great Western Railway Line and Milton Road into the former Didcot A Power Station site;
- A new Didcot to Culham bridge between the A4130 and A415; and
- A Clifton Hampden bypass

The new infrastructure not only provides opportunities for sustainable travel along the new routes but enables traffic demand management measures to be implemented elsewhere to prioritise non-motorised traffic, where appropriate. Active travel by walking and cycling has been carefully planned into the schemes and each provides new opportunities to connect areas of employment and housing for those on foot and bike using existing public rights of way.

## Appendix C

### Blewbury Parish Council - Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020

#### Report from District Councillors

#### Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and Cllr Sarah Medley

It is still hard to believe how much things have changed in the past four months. Just as we had started to adapt to lockdown life, it seems that the Government are now easing the restrictions at pace. As we try and adapt to the "new normal", we hope that you and your families are keeping well, staying safe and taking on the changing situation at a pace which suits you. We're now looking ahead at a summer period without the usual village events that we all so enjoy. However, we hope that Blewbury residents are still able to make the most of the sunny weather

over the next few months, by spending quality time with family and friends in a socially distant way. As the council itself is now also returning to a new kind of normal, we've decided to stop our regular coronavirus focused updates and return to our monthly updates in the form of newsletter articles and parish council reports. We will of course continue to keep you updated on the council's response to COVID-19 through these monthly updates, as well as on our dedicated councillor Facebook Page: [Cllrs Hayleigh Gascoigne & Sarah Medley](#). As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch with any issues or concerns - our email addresses are [hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk) and [sarah.medley@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.medley@whitehorsedc.gov.uk).

## Coronavirus Update and Community Support

### Key messages from the Vale

#### Residents:

- We're all responsible for preventing local outbreaks and keeping Oxfordshire safe
- Don't let the virus spread - keep your distance, wash your hands, stay alert
- Our safety is in our own hands
- Lockdown may be easing, but don't go easy on the virus
- We're at Alert Level 3, which means a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation

#### Businesses:

- Businesses play an important role in keeping their staff and customers safe and helping prevent the spread of the virus.
- We're all responsible for preventing local outbreaks and keeping Oxfordshire safe.
- We're at Alert Level 3, which means a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation.

### Community Hub still available

#### To contact the Community Support Team:

call: 01235 422 600

email: [communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk)

Lines are open 9am to 6pm Monday to Saturday.

Both the council staff and community groups have responded positively to the challenges of this crisis to make sure our vulnerable residents receive the support they need. Amazing work is being done by the volunteer groups in our communities, such as Blewbury Good Neighbours, as well as the staff at the Vale who have done what they always do, which is pull together, be solution focussed and support each other.

Whilst we don't know how long the UK's response to and recovery from COVID-19 will take, we do know it's likely to be some time so the Vale of White Horse District Council is making some changes to its community hub services to make sure the response is sustainable over the coming months: Lines will now be open from Monday to Saturday, 9am to 6pm.

One of the roles of our Community Hub when we first set it up was to help provide vital support to shielded residents (along with others who weren't shielded but needed support anyway), and even though these restrictions are slowly being relaxed, there will still be lots of people who need support for some time to come. Our Community Hub will continue to play an important role to do that. We want all of our shielding residents to know we're still here to provide support and advice.

From **6 July**, the government's advice for residents who are shielding is being relaxed, meaning they will be able to spend time outdoors in a group of up to six people, including those outside of their household, while maintaining social distancing. Anybody who is shielding and lives alone or is a single parent with children, will also be able to create a 'support bubble' with one other household of any size, following the same rules that are already in place for the wider population.

From **1 August**, the shielding advice will relax further, allowing those shielding to do even more, such as visit shops and places of worship, provided they take particular care to maintain social distancing and minimise contact with others outside their household. Government support, such as food packages, will remain in place until end of July. Remember, for the most up-to-date coronavirus information relating to district council support and any changes to services, please take a look at the dedicated Vale webpage for updates: [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/covid19](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/covid19)

### Re-opening play areas

Play areas in the Vale of White Horse managed by the district council will begin to re-open **from Monday 6 July**. The council will carry out a phased re-opening – this means play areas will only re-open once safety checks have

been carried out and officers are happy they are safe for people to use. The first play area to re-open will be at Abbey Meadow in Abingdon, followed by others across the town. The council will then check play areas in Wantage and Faringdon later in the week. The sites have been closed and not used for a few months, so the district council wants to ensure everything is safe before opening again, so please bear with us.

People are urged to not use play areas until they have passed safety checks and have signs to say they are safe to use again – **please do not enter any play areas which are closed.**

Important information about staying safe in our play areas - once a play area is open, visitors will be urged to stay safe by following a few simple instructions which are being introduced to reduce the risk of people transmitting COVID-19. People are asked to:

- wash or sanitise their hands before entering the play area and then again after they leave.
- come back at a quieter time, if the play area is busy.
- follow social distancing.
- only one adult per child is in the play area at a time.

If anyone notices any issues with a Vale play area they are asked to report it by calling 01235 422404 or by emailing [parks@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:parks@southandvale.gov.uk). To report anti-social behaviour – call 101.

## Business Support

### Discretionary Business Grants update

The Vale has now contacted all the businesses that had applied for a discretionary business grant to let them know the outcome of their application. We've sent all the successful applicants a grant acceptance form, which they need to sign and return before we can release their funding. We're aiming to release this within a week of receiving the acceptance form back.

Round two of the grant scheme is open until noon Monday 13 July. We've invited all the businesses rejected from round one to apply for this second one. As round two has wider criteria and asks for different evidence, it should make it easier for more businesses to apply. All the details and the application form are at [www.svbs.co.uk](http://www.svbs.co.uk).

### Re-opening advice for businesses

Following the news that certain venues like pubs, restaurants and cinemas can open from 4 July our Food and Safety team has issued reopening advice to around 1,600 businesses across both districts and are promoting the latest government guidelines for [keeping people safe in restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaways](#), and [in premises where people have close contact](#). They are also making visits to check that the necessary Coronavirus control actions are being carried out.

Our Licensing team is also continuing to provide the latest licensing guidance on our [South](#) and [Vale](#) websites and there's also lots of useful information for those looking to re-open on our [Business Support website](#). You can find full details of the venues that can open, including pubs, restaurants, and cinemas, and the safety measures they are required to put in place, on the [government's website](#).

## Council Matters

### Council Tax Support

There are approximately 6,000 residents in both South and Vale who have missed the latest payment on their 2020/21 council tax bill - this excludes those who currently receive council tax support. The council is sending letters to these residents to make them aware of the outstanding payment and to encourage them to get in touch with us if they're experiencing financial difficulties. There are a number of options available to residents that may be struggling to pay their bill such as changes to payment arrangements, by direct debit instalments, or applying for council tax support. Residents that currently receive a reduction on their council tax (through the councils' Council Tax Reduction Scheme) will receive up to a further £150 off their 2020/21 council tax bill. We are currently writing to eligible residents to let them know.

More information on the support available to help people pay their council tax can be found on our [Vale](#) website. Above all, our message to anyone who is struggling to pay remains that they should contact our council tax team as soon as possible on to discuss the support available – call 0345 302 2315 for the Vale.

The government hasn't suspended council tax during the pandemic and so it still needs to be paid. The two councils are especially concerned that people could get into further debt if they don't keep up with their payments. Anyone who is worried about being able to afford their council tax should get in touch with the councils to find out about the help that's available to best support them. This can include:

- rescheduling council tax instalments so that they start later or are spread over a longer time;



- applying for council tax support - the councils' council tax reduction scheme can help reduce the amount of council tax people have to pay – visit [www.southoxon.gov.uk/ctrs](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ctrs) or [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ctrs](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ctrs) for details;

- making payment, setting up a Debit Debit, or changing payment arrangements online

via [southoxon.gov.uk/counciltax](http://southoxon.gov.uk/counciltax) or [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax).

To support those who are self-isolating, and to help avoid unnecessary travel and contact, residents are encouraged to pay online. People can make single payments by credit or debit card when it best suits them. Alternatively, you can pay by calling the 24/7 automated payment service on 0345 302 2313 (south) or 0345 302 2315 (Vale) - please choose option 1 and option 1 again. When you call you will need to quote the council tax reference at the top of this letter or as displayed at the top of your council tax bill, so please make sure you have either of these with you.

## Council meetings:

Councillors are using Microsoft Teams to take part in the meetings and members of the public are able to watch online via a link. For details on how members of the public can submit statements or questions to be considered by a committee or council meeting please visit [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/meetings](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/meetings). The climate emergency advisory committee had its second virtual meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July, see recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTj2pCic8vzucpzlaSWE3UQ>

The first virtual full council meeting is due to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> July at 7pm, to see agenda and link to watch at home:

<http://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=2719&x=1>

## Climate and Environment

### Plastic Waste in the news

You may have seen recent news coverage on the [BBC](#) about the export of plastic waste from the UK to Turkey, and how it appears some waste is ending up dumped on roadsides instead of being recycled. In a statement the chief executive of Biffa, the councils' waste contractors said:

*"Biffa does not export any plastic waste to Turkey. The majority of the plastic we collect is reprocessed here in the UK, principally in our own plants, with the remainder being managed by carefully selected partners in countries where the environmental standards and controls are as least as good, or better, than those of the UK."*

### Councils remind residents to recycle responsibly

Thousands of residents in southern Oxfordshire have found their recycling bins unemptied each week because they have put the wrong things in them. Putting non-recyclable items in recycling can contaminate a whole truckload, which is then rejected at the recycling facility. This turns neighbours' recycling into rubbish and ultimately wastes energy and raw materials by removing these items from the recycling process. For more information about what can and cannot be recycled please see our website: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/recyclingrubbish-and-waste/recycling/what-can-i-recycle>

Bin crews in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts have stepped up monitoring of recycling bins in recent months as the lockdown has meant an increase in household waste, which has meant an increased risk of people putting the wrong items in recycling bins. To remind residents about what can (and can't) be recycled, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have devised a new recycling quiz available here:

<https://survey.southandvale.gov.uk/s/TheGreenRecyclingBinQuiz/>

### Air pollution reduced by more than half in parts of southern Oxfordshire as walking and cycling increases

World Environment Day was on 5<sup>th</sup> June, and South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have announced that following lockdown there has been a marked reduction in air pollution in our districts – down by nearly 60 per cent in one location. The lack of traffic and the increase in walking and cycling has helped improve the local air quality across southern Oxfordshire. There has been a marked reduction in Nitrogen Dioxides (NO<sub>2</sub>) in our air. NO<sub>2</sub> is created by the burning of fuel from our cars and can be the cause of breathing difficulties, especially for those with existing respiratory conditions such as asthma. It can also contribute toward a number of other negative impacts on our health.

### Improvements for cycling across Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire County Council has announced a series of improvements aimed at making cycling safer and more attractive for a range of journeys across Oxfordshire, with funding from a £2.9m two-stage Government grant. You can find out more about the cycling improvements via the [county council's press release](#).

The first phase will involve:

- purpose-built cycle parking areas, particularly in market town squares, close to rural bus stops, and at park and rides.

- priority given to cycles, from changes to traffic light timings to prioritise people travelling by bike to adapting the road network to allow more space for bikes.

- an upgraded maintenance scheme for cycle paths and cycle routes, with improved signage and route markings.

As part of the [Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#), along with the other districts, the Vale is working with the county council on a series of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), with Didcot among the first locations.

We (Hayleigh and Sarah) feel that this first round of improvements don't go nearly far enough to address the huge deficiencies in cycling provision in the area around Blewbury, as there is clearly a lot of work to be done to make cycling more inclusive and accessible to cyclists of all ages and abilities. The [current work schedule for cycleways](#) does not include any of the roads around Blewbury or the other local villages. We wait in eager anticipation to see which cycling improvements the second stage of the government funding will bring! In any case, of particular interest to our area are the plans for the [Science Vale Cycle Network](#). You can sign up for monthly updates via [the county council's transport bulletins page](#).

## Housing Infrastructure Funding granted for new roads around Didcot

News that £218m of funding to boost infrastructure in the Didcot Garden Town has finally been agreed has been welcomed by South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils. The government awarded the Housing Infrastructure Funding to support the significant growth in housing in the Didcot Garden Town area. Cllr Sue Cooper, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "We've always said that Didcot and the surrounding areas are in great need of increased infrastructure provision based on the number of new homes already built in the town over the past decade. So it's good to see the money has been agreed at last. We will need an even greater focus on sustainable transport in the long term, so I'm pleased that walking and cycling routes are included in these projects – we'll be working positively with our partner councils to continue that work and it would be good to see some delivery of improved pedestrian and cycle routes soon."

Cllr Emily Smith, Leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council, said: "The success of Didcot Garden Town really depends on having the right infrastructure in place to support the town's growth. We're pleased to have worked in partnership with all the other authorities in the county to put Oxfordshire in a position to secure funding for infrastructure required before any new homes are built at Valley Park."

Projects that will receive a share of the funding are:

- Widening the A4130 from A34 Milton Interchange towards Didcot from single to dual carriageway;
- A new Science Bridge over the A4130, Great Western Railway Line and Milton Road into the former Didcot A Power Station site;
- A new Didcot to Culham bridge between the A4130 and A415; and
- A Clifton Hampden bypass

## Pride Month

With Pride Month coming to an end last week, we (Hayleigh and Sarah) are reflecting on June 2019 when we were delighted to attend the first ever Abingdon Pride. This was also the first ever Pride Event in the Vale of White Horse District Council. We hope that members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies were still able to celebrate Pride this year in a safe and socially distanced way. Roll on 2021 - we can't wait to attend Abingdon Pride again, and we're particularly excited for the closer-to-home Didcot Pride!

Until then, we are pleased to see the joint statement released by the leaders of both district councils, reiterating the councils' support for the LGBTQ+ community:

*"We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our councils' support for the LGBTQ+ community. Our organisations provide equality of services and care to everyone, regardless of people's age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation. The councils are also committed to creating a working environment in which we advance equality of opportunity and integrate fairness and equity into every aspect of our employment practices."*