

# BLEWBURY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held remotely via an e-conference system on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 7.30 pm.

In attendance: - Cllrs M Blythe (MB/Vice Chair), M Penington (MP), M Jacobs (MJ), J Gibson (JG), V Humphries (VH), P Kilroe (PK), L Inglis (LI). E Cooper (EC/Clerk), D Hollick (DH/Lengthman). County Cllr M Fox-Davies (MF-D), District Cllr H Gascoigne. One member of the public.

1. Apologies for absence  
Cllrs C Lakeland, M Shayler
2. Declarations of interests relating to this meeting  
None.
3. County Councillor's report (see Appendix B below)  
The level of litter throughout the village was highlighted. MF-D to check whose responsibility this is.  
Clerk's note: - In an email dated 16.3.21, South and Vale revealed litter picking services had been suspended.  
HG confirmed it was part of the Biffa contract with the DC to keep streets clean.
4. District Councillor's report (see Appendix C below)
5. Lengthman's report (see Appendix A below)  
In addition DH stated the following: -
  - 5.1 The Velux windows in the Clubhouse were now operational. Controllers are installed for each window & blind.
  - 5.2 The drying out process was ongoing, although the company were due to be on site next week.  
Clerk's note: - All drying out equipment was removed on 17.3.21 & a dryness certificate issued.
  - 5.3 Following a meeting with G Nye, DH has written a draft operational document for the plant room.
  - 5.4 MB extended his thanks to DH & JG for their efforts with the Clubhouse.
6. PCSO report (see Appendix D below)
7. Open Forum  
To receive representations from members of the public if present. Maximum 15 minutes (3 minutes per person).  
Mr R Southwell-Sander talked about the cricket club & it's use of the Clubhouse facilities. MP agreed to talk further outside of the meeting.
8. Approve previous minutes  
Minutes of the BPC meeting 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021 approved as a true record.
9. To report on Outstanding Actions from previous meetings and any matters arising  
Confirm whether actions are cleared, carried forward or cancelled.

No.	Actions from March meeting	When by
1.	JG to check with BG re addendum to Lease (OCC/VH) following changes regarding the school.	April meet
2.	Clerk to speak to DH re Heather Way sign re remedial work	April meet
3.	EC to email PCC re flag	April meet
4.	EC to email best practice from new 'Good councillor's guide to cyber	April meet

	security' to council	
5.	JG to write to Biffa re bin collections in the village	April meet
6.	MP to speak to RSS re cricket club arrangements	April meet
7.	JG to obtain formal quotes for KAP remedial work	April meet
8.	DH to report back on proposed lych gate cleaning actions.	April meet
9.	DH & MS to prepare a proposal on the clearing of the cemetery footpaths	April meet

No.	Actions from February meeting	When by
1.	DH to address wooden platform issues on bridge platform at KAP	Actioned
2.	DH to replace kissing gate post at cemetery	Actioned
3.	DH to look at new lych gate & assess cleaning requirements	Actioned.
5.	Clerk to contact PCSO re speed watch Community Speedwatch Newsletter 1 (sent 11.2.21) refers 'NO COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH until it is deemed that it is safe to do so'.	Actioned
7.	MJ to continue endeavours regarding spraying signage	Actioned
8.	JG to include in Bulletin entry explanatory difference between Bridleways, Byways & Footpaths.	Actioned
9.	VH to look at CPRE article on 8. above (Countryside Code) & post online	Actioned
12.	Clerk to place order for two new noticeboards	Actioned

10. To hear the Planning Committee Report & Ratify/Agree Planning Responses

10.1 To agree the council's response to the following consultation

10.1.1 P20/V2583/HH amendment 1 & P20/V2584/LB

Humfreys, London Road, Blewbury

Internal alterations & repairs, inc replacement of services throughout building. Installation of EV charging point. Alterations & repair works to roof. New single storey rear extensions & glazed link to outbuilding. New garden courtyard wall.

Deadline 16.3.21

BPC no objections

10.1.2 P21/V0338/HH Beavers, South Street, Blewbury

New self-contained incidental room/office in garden.

Deadline 17.3.21

BPC no objections

10.1.3 P21/V0405/FUL & P21/V0406/LB

Abners, Church Road, Blewbury

Subdivision of plot & conversion & extension of listed Barn to create additional dwelling.

Deadline 25.3.21

BPC agreed to object to this consultation.

10.1.4 P21/V0431/HH Grove House, Bessels Way, Blewbury

Proposed single storey rear extension.

Deadline 26.3.21

BPC agreed to include this consultation & agreed no objections.

10.2 To note planning permissions received during the month

10.2.1 P20/V3327/FUL Tennis Courts, Recreation Ground, Bohams Road, Blewbury.

Permission granted 9.2.21.

10.2.2 P19/V3290/HH The Garden House, Rear Ashbrook House, Westbrook Street. Blewbury

Permission granted 25.2.21

10.2.3 P20/V1580/HH Amendment 1, 4 Chailey Gardens, Blewbury

Planning permission 3.3.21

10.3 To note any planning withdrawals during the month

10.4.1 P20/V2216/LB The Dower House, London Road, Blewbury

10.4.2 P20/V2215/HH The Dower House, London Road, Blewbury

11. Update on Finance & Administration

11.1 Updates on contributions planned expenditure (S106, CIL, CPF, SBRR).

The Clerk acknowledged a payment of £1334 from VoWH, & had asked HG if this could be identified.

JG identified work in the KAP area including paintwork, wood preservation & a new sign. JG to obtain quotes.

11.2 Approve end of month reconciliations for Lloyds & Barclays banks.

Sent in advance of the meeting to the Chairman. To be signed at a later date.

11.3 Agree authorisers for this month's payments

11.3.1 JG & PK agreed to authorise payments

11.3.2 Council agreed to discuss signatories at the April meeting

11.4 Approve payments to be made under ancillary powers and within budgeted amounts

Council also agreed to two additional payments: -

11.4.1 R.Andrews £50 for new laptop set-up

11.4.2 G. Nye £30 for assistance with the plant room at the clubhouse

<b>PAYEE</b>	<b>Description / Power to spend</b>	<b>Amount</b>
E Cooper / D Hollick	Clerk & Lengthman's salary and expenses for February (LGA1972 s112(2))	£1831.42
NEST DD	Clerk's pension February (LGPSR2013 (SI2013/2356))	£71.33
HMRC	PAYE Clerk & Lengthman payment February (LGA1972 s112(2))	£253.43
Biffa Waste Services Ltd DD	Waste services February (LGA1972 s137)	£88.13
BT DD	Clubhouse line rental February (LGA1972 s137)	£35.04
Bluebird Graphics (Creative solutions)	Noticeboards x 2 (LGA 1972 s137) Paid, to be ratified.	£1132.61
T A Hale & Son	Velux Window repairs (work completed 2.3.21)	£3229.60
ICO	Annual data protection fee (LGA 1972 s137) DD set up 10.3.21	£40.00
OPFA	Annual membership (LGA 1972 s137)	£42.00
OALC	Annual subscription (LGA 1972 s143)	£354.44
<b>Total</b>		<b>£7078.00</b>

<b>Major Receipts</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
10.02.21	J Cook memorial	£75.00
12.02.21	Howard Chadwick Burial Fees (J Kay)	£285.00
19.02.21	VoWH DC (tbc)	£1334.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>£1694.00</b>

11.5 Ratify the change to the Blewbury Parish Council Cemetery Regulations agreed by email as follows: -

That memorials on cremated remains graves may be made of natural stone or a sustainably sourced, highly durable, hardwood.

11.6 Agree any actions necessary following the issue of the Oxfordshire Protocol document.

Emails issued 19 & 25 February refer.

It was agreed that this document required no specific action by the council.

12. Update on the Village Hall Refurbishment & VHEMC  
 JG reported that there was still some finishing off work to be done, but nothing that would prevent a full opening of the hall when circumstances allow. The hall would be open for elections if necessary. The final bill from MDGroup was still under discussion with Ridge.
  
13. Clubhouse & recreation ground / TFF & car park
  - 13.1 Update from the Clubhouse Working Group
    - 13.1.1 Clubhouse post flood remedial work update  
 Regular progress updates had been issued by the Clerk & included: -
      - Remedial work to the fire alarm system
      - Remedial work to the intruder alarm system
      - Velux window upgrade work completed
      - Work by DH to understand the plant room operations
    - 13.1.2 Clubhouse open for use update  
 Discussions regarding the logistics of opening to the public & what actions need to be taken are the subject of frequent discussions.
    - 13.1.3 Velux window repairs  
 Work completed 2.3.21
  - 13.2 Update on Tickers Folly Field recreation ground and car park  
 Muddy conditions & overflowing litter.
  
14. Risk Management
  - 14.1 Update on village play spaces (TFF / KAP) relating to risk  
 No update.
  - 14.2 Any other updates on Management of Risk  
 None reported
  - 14.3 Update on Compliance  
 ICO membership renewed.
  - 14.4 Latest advice on COVID-19 response  
 As provided by CC & DC reports & in Bulletin
  
15. Update on any issues relating to the Environment
  - 15.1 Update from Sustainable Blewbury  
 No update this month.
  - 15.2 Update on the OGB & ONPA  
 LI reported on the Oxford/Cambridge Arc.
  - 15.3 Any other issues relating to the environment  
 JG reported the increased levels of litter & overflowing bins throughout the village. JG to contact Biffa & report in the Bulletin.
  
16. Update on any issues relating to Footways, Footpaths, rights of way and open spaces
  - 16.1 Update on Footpaths in general
    - 16.1.1 Ramblers Association – PPW. Email 1.3.21 refers.
  - 16.2 Update on any other issues relating to the above  
 Morton path broken fence. JG to write letter to Ladycroft Park office.
  
17. Update on any issues relating to roads, road safety and public transport  
 No update.

18. Update on any outstanding consultations

No update.

19. To set the date of the next meeting(s) of the Council

19.1 To agree that there will be no APM this year

Council agreed that there would be no APM this year, due to restrictions, but Clerk to ask for reports & publish.

19.2 To hear an update on the resumption of face-to-face meetings

Clerk reported that legislation allowing online meetings ends on 7<sup>th</sup> May. However, legislation allowing face to face meetings does not apply until June. Further guidance is expected.

19.2 Full council meeting Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm via an e-conference system.

The meeting finished at 8.58pm.

## **Appendix A**

### **LENGTHMAN'S REPORT - FEBRUARY 2020**

Still no grass cutting this month.

All lawn mowers have been serviced and ready to go.

The repairs have been done to the slide platform at KAP.

Also the repair to the Cemetery kissing gate on Boham's Road is complete.

Most of the work this month has been dealing with the Clubhouse due to the water leak.

Liz has circulated what has been going on with the insurers and various tradesmen.

The Velux windows in the Melland Room have now been converted.

David

## **Appendix D**

There have been further reports of criminal damage to the gallops near to the Ridgway. We have been carrying out operations around this and working with the owners. We have managed to speak with persons in the area on motorcycles and although they were not responsible for any damage that we could prove, they were issued with breach of covid fines. Some of my colleagues have also been in conversation with the ridgeway trust to discuss issues around "of roaders" which I am awaiting an update on.

Gary Kirby, PCSO C9455, Wantage and Grove Neighbourhood Police Team, Non emergency number: 101,  
[gary.kirby@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:gary.kirby@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk)    <http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk>

## **Appendix B**

### **REPORT BLEWBURY PARISH COUNCIL MARCH 2021**

#### **FROM CLLR MIKE FOX-DAVIES**

#### **Oxfordshire update**

For the week ending 26 February, there has been a total of 407 confirmed cases in Oxfordshire, compared with 534 new cases the previous week, a reduction of 24 per cent.

This is equivalent to a weekly rate of new cases of 58.8 per 100,000 residents.

The figures are summarised in the table below. This includes the number of new cases for this week compared to the previous week (up to 19 February) across the county and its five districts.

#### **Cases of COVID-19 by district**

	Cases in 7 days up to 19/02	Rate per 100,000 population	Cases in 7 days up to 26/02	Rate per 100,000 population
Cherwell	156	103.7	110	73.1
Oxford	157	103.0	125	82.0
South Oxfordshire	89	62.7	67	47.2
Vale of White Horse	85	62.5	77	56.6
West Oxfordshire	47	42.5	28	25.3
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>77.2</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>58.8</b>

Data correct as at 5pm on 2 March.

#### **COVID-19 dashboard**

There is a [COVID-19 dashboard](#) on our website where you can access daily COVID-19 statistics.

#### **Welcoming all pupils back to school**

Oxfordshire schools are reopening to all pupils from Monday 8 March. Primary children must return to school on 8 March (unless parents have received a letter stating that their child is clinically extremely vulnerable), while secondary and further education students will commence a staggered return from 8 March to enable rapid testing to be carried out.

Schools are following national guidance on COVID safety and have a suite of measures in place. Face masks will be required in all areas of secondary schools from 8 March. They must also be worn on school transport and public transport. Social distancing must be observed at school gates at drop-off and collection times. A letter has been sent from our Corporate Director for Children's Services, Kevin Gordon, to all parents to advise them of the measures in place and to ask for their support in encouraging children to adhere to them.

#### **Home testing kits to support the return to school**

The government has announced that all households with primary and secondary school and college-aged children and young people, including childcare and support bubbles, will be encouraged to start regular twice-weekly rapid lateral flow testing as schools return on 8 March.

Tests are available for **adults in these households** to [order online](#), which can be delivered to their home or collected at a local **symptomatic PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test site**. These PCR sites are where people go to get tested when they have symptoms of COVID-19 and because of that, collection of these home test kits is set for 1pm - 7pm when testing of symptomatic people will not be taking place.

The PCR local testing sites (LTS) and regional testing site (RTS) offering the collection of home testing kits (referred to as LTS-collect and RTS-collect) in Oxfordshire are:

#### **Regional testing site (drive-through)**

- Oxford Parkway, Water Eaton Park & Ride, Oxford Road, Oxford, OX2 8HA

#### **Local testing sites (walk-through)**

- Woodgreen Leisure Centre, Woodgreen Avenue, Banbury, OX16 0HS
- Osney Lane, Oxford, OX1 1NY
- Woodford Way car park, Witney, OX28 6JS

Parents do not need to make an appointment, but they can [check online](#) if the location is open or busy before they go. A reminder collection is 1pm - 7pm.

In Oxfordshire, home tests kits **cannot currently be collected from the county council's symptom-free testing sites**, which are Spiceball Leisure Centre (Banbury), The Beacon (Wantage), The King's Centre (Oxford). We will keep you posted if this changes.

#### **Symptom-free testing for key workers**

Testing plays a key role in helping stop the spread of the virus and our [symptom-free testing programme](#) includes everyone across the council and also open to public-facing workers across the county who need to leave home to work or volunteer. As before, this also includes childminders.

#### **Testing for people who have COVID-19 symptoms**

Across Oxfordshire, we have a range of testing sites for **people who have COVID-19 symptoms**, including drive-through and walk-in sites. We also have a number of mobile testing units operating in the county and the latest dates and locations for these are below. [Booking](#) is required for all testing sites.

#### **Mobile testing units** including

##### **Dalton Barracks, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6JB**

- March: 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31.

#### **Topping the table for recycling and composting**

Residents in Oxfordshire have helped the county top the table nationally when it comes to recycling and composting for the seventh year in a row. I am delighted to say that Oxfordshire County Council has once again been named the best performing county council waste disposal authority in England, according to new government figures released on 3 March 2021. For more information and the statistics, read the [news story](#) on our website.

#### **Residents invited to become on-call firefighters**

People living close to the county's fire stations are being encouraged to consider becoming paid on-call firefighters as part of the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) recruitment campaign in March. We are looking to recruit local firefighters who participate in a wide range of activities in the local area, from responding to emergency calls to supporting safety needs. They also provide crucial prevention advice to help keep residents safe. Read more in the [news story](#) on our website and I would be grateful if you could please share this information with your community.

#### **Consultation launched on Oxfordshire's draft transport blueprint**

Residents and organisations across the county are being offered the chance to help shape the transformation of transport and digital connectivity across Oxfordshire in a consultation on a draft blueprint for the future, which runs until 29 March. The new local transport and connectivity plan (LTCP) sets out a vision for Oxfordshire that will contribute to developing a zero-carbon economy for the county and transform the health and wellbeing of residents. Residents can have their say by visiting the [county council's consultation site](#). To find out more, see the [news story](#) on our website.

### **Government commits to supercharge the Oxford-Cambridge Arc**

The government has this week announced an ambitious plan to transform the Oxford-Cambridge Arc into the UK's fastest-growing economic region. The Arc is a globally significant area between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge, made up of the five counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. It supports over two million jobs, adds over £110 billion to the economy every year, and houses one of the fastest-growing economies in England.

The aim is build a better economic, social and environmental future for the area, with high-quality, well-connected and sustainable communities. With the right interventions and investment, analysis suggests that by 2050 economic output could double to over £200bn.

To achieve this ambition, the government will work with local partners to:

- **Develop a spatial framework for the Arc – this is a** long-term regional plan to help coordinate the infrastructure, environment and new developments in the area, and help unlock the long-term potential of the area in a sustainable way. It will give communities a chance to shape the long-term future of their area and will help ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the region.
- **Explore the creation of an Arc Growth Body** – this would be a clear economic leadership voice for the Arc, championing its talent and assets internationally, supporting businesses, and fostering innovation.

You can [read the announcement](#) on gov.uk.

### **Census update**

Census day is 21 March. Currently our communications focus on reminding residents of the date, to watch out for their census letter in early March and the benefits of completing the census. If you have any questions contact Lisa Stead at [lisa.stead58@field.Census.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.stead58@field.Census.gov.uk) or on 07452 942723 (Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse) and Sinead Leach at [sinead.leach49@field.Census.gov.uk](mailto:sinead.leach49@field.Census.gov.uk) or on 07452 948074 (South Oxfordshire and Oxford City).

## **Appendix C**

**Blewbury Parish Council - Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Report from District Councillors**

**Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and Cllr Sarah Medley**

**Coronavirus Update and Community Support**

**Community Support Hub**

The Community Hub continues to be available to help people access support and essentials during the lockdown if they have nobody else to turn to and can be contacted on the usual details below. The councils' Housing Needs team are available to help people who are at risk of being made homeless or who are sleeping rough – for more details visit [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/housing](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/housing). Support is also available to residents who are



experiencing financial difficulties – to find out more please visit [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/benefits](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/benefits). If you are having difficulty paying your council tax please visit [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax)

**To contact the Community Support Team: call: 01235 422 600 Monday to Thursday 8.30-5pm and Fridays 8.30-4.30pm email: [communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk)**

**fill in an online form at: [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/communityhub](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/communityhub)**

**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)**

COVID-19 rates across Oxfordshire

The number of positive cases in Oxfordshire overall is still falling but more slowly than it has been recently, with a five per cent reduction in cases over the last week. The “R” rate in Oxfordshire is currently between 0.6 and 0.8. We’ve seen a very slight increase in weekly infection rate in the Vale, which is 61 cases per 100,000 – up from 59.6 last week. The rate in South Oxfordshire has gone down again this week and is currently at 54.2 cases per 100,000.

Vaccinations

- **39,122** people have been vaccinated in South Oxfordshire (population:140,504)
- **35,117** in the Vale (population: 133,732)

The latest figures are updated on the county council’s interactive dashboard on a daily basis. It’s important we continue to stay vigilant and stick to the rules to protect ourselves and others. The ‘hands, face, space’ rules remain important to follow even for those who have been vaccinated. We are continuing to promote the help and support available for those who have to self-isolate or who are facing financial difficulties due to COVID.

## COVID-19: Vaccinations of cohorts 1 - 4 across Oxfordshire



**Over 95%**

of our over 80s population vaccinated



**All frontline Health & Social Care workers - offered the vaccine**



**Care homes**

100% of care homes visited



**Vaccination centres**

- 1 Large vaccination centre
- 2 Hospital hubs
- 21 GP-led hubs



**Nearly 95%**

of our 75-79 population vaccinated



**Projected vaccine uptake**

Everybody in cohorts 1-4 offered a vaccine



**Over 95%**

70-74 year olds & clinically extremely vulnerable vaccinated



If you are over 65 and still haven't had your vaccine, please do come forward.



**Hands Face Space**

Remain important rules to follow even if you have been vaccinated, as you may still be able to spread COVID to others.



We are now offering the vaccine to 65-69 year-olds, carers and adults with underlying health conditions aged between 18 and 64. All those eligible can book at [www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination](http://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination) or call 119 free of charge, between 7am and 11pm seven days a week.

**For more advice**

[www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk)

Based on data from NIMS, up to 01.03.21.

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System

## The Beacon now an asymptomatic test centre

From 23rd February, The Beacon in Wantage became a COVID-19 testing site for public-facing workers and volunteers who are not displaying symptoms. The capacity for regular testing for public-facing workers is good, with testing now expanded to include everyone who needs to leave home to work or volunteer and cannot access workplace testing from their employer. This includes taxi drivers, independent retailers, and tradespeople such as plumbers and electricians.

People in these roles who cannot work from home and do not have access to workplace testing can book a free test at the centre via the county council's **online booking system**. Tests take only 15 minutes with results available within an hour. South and Vale district councils have worked closely with partners across Oxfordshire to help set up this rapid symptom-free testing site to help stop the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and vital social care services, and ultimately to save lives. Around 1 in 3 people with Covid-19 have no symptoms but can still pass it on and so regular testing of public-facing workers will help to stop the spread of the virus.

Garden waste collections have resumed We have good news for garden waste customers – collections resumed from 15th Feb. Please share this news far and wide and with any friends and family in the district. The service will happily collect any real Christmas trees from garden waste customers if they still have them. We're just asking them where possible to cut the tree up and pop it inside the bin. Otherwise it can be put out for collection next to the brown bin. There are more details on the service resuming on our garden waste webpage . We had to delay the restart of the service as many of our bin crews were off sick or were having to self-isolate due to COVID-19. While we are pleased to say that we now have enough crew members to complete the rounds we are still working on tight staffing levels and cannot rule out more disruption if those levels dip suddenly as they did before.

## Business support during the pandemic

The government has confirmed details of the next payment period for the *Local restrictions support grant (closed) addendum*, which provides ongoing funding for rate-paying businesses that have been forced to close due to the national lockdown.

The second payment cycle covers 16 February to 31 March 2021:

- businesses with a property of rateable value £15,000 or less, may be eligible for £2,096
- businesses with a property of rateable value over £15,000 but less than £51,000, may be eligible for £3,143
- those with a property of rateable value £51,000 or above, may be eligible for £4,714.

So far, we have paid out more than £2.6million from the first payment cycle of this grant, covering 5 January to 15 February, supporting more than 1,000 businesses across South and Vale. All eligible businesses should have received an email confirming their payment arrangements for this period.

The Vale will now begin the process of preparing the new grants in advance of payment, subject to us receiving final clarification, including grant funding, from the government. We expect to be able to email eligible businesses confirming the payment process and their grant allocation week commencing 8 March if not before. Businesses in receipt of this grant do not need to take any action, they will continue to receive the money automatically without having to apply again. For more details about the grants available to businesses visit [svbs.co.uk](http://svbs.co.uk).

## Budget 2021 - Restart grants for businesses

In the Budget this week, the Chancellor announced that pubs, restaurants, shops and other businesses hit hardest by the pandemic will be able to access a £5 billion grant scheme to help them reopen as lockdown is eased. Non-essential retailers will get help to reopen and trade safely with the new 'Restart grants', of up to £6,000 per premises. Hospitality, hotels, gyms, as well as personal care and leisure firms, will be eligible for up to £18,000 per premises – a larger grant as they are due to open later in the roadmap than retailers. We will have responsibility for distributing these grants and will receive the funding in April. We'll have more information on the processes for this in due course once we've had the full details from the government.

## Local News

### Valley Park

We were very pleased with the outcome of Vale of White Horse District Council Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday 16th February - the committee agreed unanimously to DEFER the decision on the Valley Park planning application! This is great news, as it means there is now more time available for residents and councillors to really push for our own local vision of what Valley Park should be. Deferring the application was voted for on the basis that further clarity needs to be sought on the following key issues with the Valley Park proposal before a decision can be made:

**B4493 Roundabout between Harwell and Didcot** - committee asked council officers to look at this design again and consider alternative options to make this monstrous 5-arm roundabout safer and more accessible for cyclists. Thank you to the HarBUG - Harwell Bicycle Users Group and Sustainable Harwell for your excellent speeches on this issue, and special shout out to local resident Kate Stevenson Weal for your Facebook comment about an underpass on the roundabout - this sparked an entire debate the possibility of an underpass, bridge or another alternative solution to be explored in the design!

**Healthcare Provision** - the committee asked council officers to go back to the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group - OCCG once again to obtain a proper answer regarding the medical provision for Valley Park. This site would bring 10,000 new residents to the area and yet there is no provision in the plans for a GP surgery or any Primary Medical Care, primarily because the OCCG didn't even respond to the consultation in the first place! Thank you to Patient Participation Group (PPG) chairman Stewart Lilly for speaking on behalf of all 3 Didcot Medical Centres - we're certain that your eye-opening statistics about the pressure our local services are under was key in influencing this decision.

**Biodiversity** - massive well done to Sally Povolotsky for your fantastic speech raising the issues with biodiversity considerations on the site, including the protection of red kites. Thanks to you, the committee asked for the financial contributions from the developer relating to biodiversity off-setting (totalling £200,000) to be brought forward from a staged payment (after 1000th house is occupied) to a full amount paid upfront prior to commencement of the development. A brilliant win for protecting the natural environment before the first house is even built!

The link below contains our extensive written statement that we submitted to the committee in advance of the meeting - we used this to clearly lay out our objectives, with the council policies to back them up. Two different members of the committee commended us for the high quality of our statement!

<https://sustainable-harwell.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ward-Councillors-Statement-Planning-Committee-16.02.21-Valley-Park-P14-V2873-O.pdf>

If you didn't catch the meeting, you can catch up any time on the YouTube link below to see the speeches and debate: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xZR4Ks-N3o>

Updates since the planning committee meeting on 16th February:

- The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) have now responded to the Valley Park planning application, asking the developer to provide just **under £4million** for healthcare provision, as well as allocating land for a GP surgery site, in the event that the one on Great Western Park does not get built. This is brilliant news, as previously there was no response and hence no money or land allocated for healthcare, which was extremely concerning, and one of the key reasons the planning committee voted to defer the decision on the planning application. The response from the OCCG needs to pass various planning tests so it is not yet set in stone, but we are very happy that this is a big step in the right direction.
- There have been many rumours flying around about when Valley Park will be coming back to planning committee for further consideration. We would just like to clarify that it can only come back to committee once the planning officers are satisfied that the issues raised at the deferral decision have been addressed. We have been informed today that due to purdah, i.e. the time before an election period (in this case local elections on May 6th) in which councils are not permitted to make big decisions, the application for Valley Park will not come back to planning committee until May at the earliest.
- Finally thank you to everyone who attended our residents' feedback session on Valley Park last week. It was great to hear your views, it is clear that there are still a lot of concerns and questions around the roundabout design, the healthcare and biodiversity/sustainability. We plan to organise further feedback

sessions in future to focus on these topics, so watch this space! In the meantime please feel free to email us your ideas and thoughts about the roundabout design, we can pass these on to the planning officers for consideration by the developer.

- The news of the decision on Valley Park was featured in a recent edition of the Didcot Herald: [https://www.heraldseries.co.uk/news/19111212.plans-4-000-homes-valley-park-near-didcot-delayed/?fbclid=IwAR2itsHerQwA3Ghqs8J1xdgNZGn1zMsK6nW0GPI6Zz6cnDVmPQ\\_8IwK9iVE](https://www.heraldseries.co.uk/news/19111212.plans-4-000-homes-valley-park-near-didcot-delayed/?fbclid=IwAR2itsHerQwA3Ghqs8J1xdgNZGn1zMsK6nW0GPI6Zz6cnDVmPQ_8IwK9iVE)

## Neighbourhood plans

Chilton Parish Council has submitted its draft neighbourhood plan to the council and the council is now carrying out a consultation which launched on **Wednesday 17 February and will run until midnight on Wednesday 7 April 2021.**

## Council News

### 2021/2022 Budget at Full council 10th February

The most recent meeting of Full Council was on Wednesday 10th February – the agenda and link for viewing online can be found at <http://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=108&MIId=2722> The key agenda item for discussion was the proposed budget for 2021/2022. The council set out budget plans which protect front line services, continue to support local residents and businesses through the pandemic and help stabilise the council's finances for the medium term. The budget would result in an increase of less than 10p per week on Band D Council Tax. Annual council tax will be £141.69 for services provided by the district council, up from £136.69 this year. The Vale currently has the 15th lowest council tax in the country for a shire district and significantly lower than the national average of £194.22.

Since the pandemic began, the district council has re-allocated significant resources in order to provide vital support for residents and businesses across the district. This has included: administering more than 3,300 Covid-19 grant payments to local businesses totalling £21 million. We provided the new Community Support Hub, supporting 5,208 vulnerable residents, including providing direct assistance for 785 people. It is currently expected that this work will need to continue well into 2021. The council's income also remains significantly affected by the Covid-19 restrictions.

Like many councils, the Vale still faces significant financial challenges which have been caused by years of reduced funding from government, and the lack of clarity about the future of local authority financing. Along with the other Oxfordshire councils, the Vale has repeatedly called on the government to urgently provide additional funding to help ensure the future of vital public services.

To see the full press release on the budget proposals, please visit

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/budget/councils-2021-22-budget-report-addresses-covid-19-challenges/>

### Councils looking into the possibility of a joint South and Vale Local Plan

The two district councils in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are looking into the possibility of developing a joint Local Plan for the area to significantly reduce costs and help the councils meet their ambitious targets for making the two districts carbon neutral.

Local Plans are used to help determine planning applications and set out how and where new housing developments should take place, along with identifying the infrastructure needed to support them. They also set out policies on what kind of housing is appropriate and acceptable; what the local requirements for affordable housing are; and can even set requirements on the energy-efficiency levels of new developments. These are all key themes and aspirations that are addressed in both councils' recently adopted new Corporate Plans, which set out their visions for their districts. Both councils have also committed to do everything they can to address the climate emergency. According to reports being seen by the councils' Scrutiny Committees next week, the significant consensus on these issues makes this a rare opportunity to create a joint Local Plan. The reports were discussed by the two councils' Scrutiny Committees on 8 and 9 March in South and Vale respectively and will then be debated at the Vale's Cabinet on 17 March and South Oxfordshire's on 18 March. Any District recommendations from the Cabinets would then be debated and voted on at the full Council meetings on 24 and 25 March at Vale and South respectively.

## Low carbon leisure centres

Faringdon leisure centre is to get a £400,000 refurbishment with the potential to reduce its carbon footprint by 500,000 kwh over a year - the equivalent of the annual energy use of 135 houses.

The Vale of White Horse District Council has been awarded a £361,746 grant from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The rest of the funding needed will come from S106 money. The refurbishment will enable centre to use low carbon and renewable energy by replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps powered with new solar panels.

In February 2019 the council joined a growing number of local authorities and other organisations in declaring a climate emergency. The council is calling on the government to support action on climate change locally. All councils in Oxfordshire are signed up to carbon reduction targets through the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy and are committed to a 50 per cent reduction in carbon emission between 2008 and 2030.

The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) recommended that the Vale of White Horse reduce carbon emissions by 75 per cent by 2030. The council has also committed to becoming a carbon neutral district by 2045. In their Corporate Plan, published last year, Vale Cabinet members identified Tackling the Climate Emergency and Building Healthy Communities as two of their key priorities. The work on this project will start this month and be completed by the end of March 2022. The council's officers are now commissioning studies to help them seek further funding for the decarbonisation of more leisure centres.

## New waste calendars

Residents will shortly be receiving their new waste collection calendar for the coming year – it'll be included in with the council tax bills hitting doormats this month. Residents who get their council tax bills electronically will get a link to an online version of the calendar in their email bill. The new calendar which runs from April 2021 – March 2022 is available here – [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/waste-calendar](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/waste-calendar)

## South and Vale residents are top recyclers in the country... again

We're very pleased to reveal that in the latest government figures, our environmentally conscious residents in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are the second and third best recyclers in England. South Oxfordshire recycle 64 per cent of its waste, with the Vale recycling 63.3 per cent. This puts the two districts way above the national recycling rate of 45.5 per cent and they are also two of only 11 local authorities in the country with a recycling rate above 60 per cent. Both districts have consistently been in the top ten in the past five years. As the figures cover the period from the beginning of April 2019 to the end of March 2020, they only include the very first week of the national lockdown last year. So the impact of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns on the collection of household waste in the districts will not be revealed until next year's figures.

## Call for people to help at the elections

We are looking for people to take on paid work at this year's elections. On Thursday 6 May our residents will go to the polls to vote in the Police and Crime Commissioner and Oxfordshire County Council elections. Some areas will also have local by-elections and neighbourhood plan referendums. The various counts will then take place over the following days. To help ensure the smooth running of this event, we need to recruit as many people as possible. There are lots of roles available, paying a flat rate or from £14 per hour, and plans are being put in place to ensure all staff can work in a Covid-19 safe environment.

**If you know anyone who may be interested in working at the elections, please encourage them to visit [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/electionjobs](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/electionjobs) to find out more and to register their interest.**

## Census packs to arrive from 3 March

Some residents will now have started receiving their Census 2021 pack, which will be dropping on doormats until 13 March. There is a lot of information on the Census website.

## Two district councils join Oxfordshire Greentech to help local businesses tackle the climate emergency

As part of their commitments to help the districts become carbon neutral, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils have struck up a brand-new partnership to help local businesses reduce their carbon footprint. As Strategic Partners, the councils will be working with Oxfordshire Greentech to help connect businesses with specialist suppliers, customers and support organisations, and access funding streams and networking opportunities to help them minimise their emissions and impact on the environment. Launched in 2019, Oxfordshire Greentech brings together a wide array of businesses, academia and other organisations to encourage innovation, collaboration and knowledge transfer. The growing network now has over 100 members as more companies see the benefits of sustainable business and new, circular economy focused business models.

For businesses wanting to take advantage of the discount in membership, visit Oxfordshire Greentech for more information via <http://oxfordshiregreentech.co.uk/>

## Changes to Vale parking arrangements confirmed following public consultation

Following a public consultation, Vale of White Horse District Council's Cabinet have approved several changes to parking arrangements to help reduce vehicle emissions. Last November almost 200 people commented on proposed changes to the parking arrangements. At their meeting on Friday 5 February, the council's Cabinet considered the consultation results, and approved that the following measures which will now be included in the district's new parking policy:

### **Reducing vehicle emissions**

In Abingdon, lorries will no longer be able to park in Rye Farm car park and specific spaces will be allocated for a coach and campervans in Hales Meadow car park. This popular move to free up more spaces in Rye Farm for smaller vehicles, should encourage people visiting from the A415 to park here on edge of town rather than joining the traffic in the town centre, helping to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

### **Encouraging electric vehicle use**

The Vale is currently working with Oxfordshire County Council with a view to introduce electric vehicle charging bays in some district council car parks. If this happens then, under the new policy, parking enforcement officers will have new powers to fine motorists who park non-electric vehicles in electric charging bays, or who leave an electric vehicle parked in a charging bay when it's not charging.

### **Tackling the car parks deficit**

The Vale's car parks, in Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage, collectively cost more than £700,000 a year to run. Once the income from parking fees has been taken into account, there is an average shortfall of over £300,000 a year, which is currently subsidised by council tax.

To help address this deficit, Cabinet agreed that the price of resident permits, which provide significant discounts on daily parking rates, would need to go up by 10 per cent each year until 2023. This decision was taken after carefully considering feedback from the public and taking the potential impact on individual residents and families into account. Members rejected options to implement a price increase of up to 100 per cent, in favour of a 10 per cent increase per year over the next three years.