

Vale of White Horse

District Councillors' Report

Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

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December 2025

Ward Overview

Parish Council Meetings

This Ward is unique in many ways and not least in that it is split across 12 parishes. We do our best to attend as many parish meetings as possible as we feel it is important to be present at times where people can speak to us in person and we can gain insights into a range of matters.

We as District councillors are guests at these meetings and will do our best to attend whenever invited, if however, you feel you need to reach us at other times please do contact us directly and do pass on our details to residents who may need our help.

Planning applications and responses

As ward councillors we follow numerous planning applications and do our best to understand and respond to these while accounting for our residents' views when doing so.

Often, we do this in parish council meetings, where we hope to gather views and support individual residents and the parish council in responding to planning applications in a way that their community needs are accounted for.

Viral was recently invited to Longcot to speak to residents concerned over an application (P25/V2310/PIP) that has a high probability of blighting the community with highways issues and exacerbate the flooding that residents already suffer from.

Viral was pleased to meet over 40 residents who had gathered to discuss the impact of the application if it were to be approved and found significant merit in the concerns by the community raised during that gathering.

Bloor Homes Planning Application at Shrivenham Golf club - P25/V2394/O

Following the developer's Environmental Impact Assessment screening request in October, Bloor Homes have now submitted an outline planning application for up to 200 homes. Kat is leading our work on this, and we are working with Shrivenham and Watchfield Parish councils, residents, and golf club members to help with responses and request further information from officers where needed. For the avoidance of doubt, we consider this a speculative development which is highly inappropriate in this location, and believe there are strong grounds for refusal, as previously.

Viral and I were recently invited to meet by the developer's Agent, which we have declined in line with our council's constitution.

The full application is here:

<https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P25/V2394/O>

The history of planning applications at this location is available through the council's interactive planning map. If you zoom in to the golf club, and click on the club house the system will provide a list of previous planning applications: <https://maps.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/gis/>.

Day Nursery application in Coleshill

We were recently contacted about an amazing project being developed in Coleshill, for a nature focused day nursery. The focus being on showing kids how their food is grown and prepared from an early age and spending more time in the outdoors.

Kat has been supporting the applicants with the planning process, to see what we can do to get a successful outcome for the applicant and parents.

At a recent visit to the site by the parish council, Viral went along and said "I was highly impressed with the organisation of the site and how well the applicant has developed this nurturing and enlightening environment for the next generation, and I would like to see more projects like these in our rural communities which suffer from a lack of local businesses. This project is even more impressive given it is in a National Trust village where we do not often see new facilities being developed"

Remembrance Day services

It was an honour and privilege to attend remembrance services this year and see firsthand how our communities come together to remember those who have fallen in defence of our freedoms.

With several services held at different times through the day, Viral laid a wreath at Watchfield, Kat attended and laid a wreath at Shrivenham. With Cllr Markham, we were able to attend more of our smaller villages including Fernham, Bourton and Ashbury.

A420 Flooding at Tuckmill Stream bridge

Through her role on the Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee, and with Cllr Markham as County Councillor, Kat is continuing to push for the regular and dangerous flooding on the A420 dip between the Highworth turn and Cross Trees roundabout to be fixed. We were assured by officers in early November that the gullies would be cleaned and jetted within a couple of weeks, but this has yet to happen.

Council News

Interim Chief Executive Interviews

The staff committee (that Viral sits on) interviewed several internal candidates in November, and we are very pleased that Adrianna Partridge will be recommended to Council in December as the preferred candidate for Chief Executive and Head of Paid Services.

Kat has established a productive and effective working relationships with Adrianna through her Scrutiny role. Adrianna has also been responsible for continuing to improve contact with the BSW ICB, so we are very pleased that such an excellent candidate is being put forward.

We welcome Adrianna; the final approval will be at full council in December.

Local Government Reorganisation

Vale, South and West Berkshire have submitted their proposals for Two Unitary Oxfordshire. With West Oxfordshire and Cherwell submitting the same.

The Green group noted at Council that the document was heavily laden with Growth and Housebuilding in the proposal document, while we appreciate this was geared towards appealing to the minister in charge, we felt that Nature recovery, Climate change and social wellbeing were underplayed and, in many ways, completely missing.

As a Green group we submitted a one-line change that emphasised these as a priority for the future unitary, and succeeded in getting this change agreed by Vale, South and West Berkshire councils.

Devolution for Oxfordshire (aka Mayoral or Strategic Authorities)

It was decided by the Vale Council to endorse the Expression of Interest letter by Oxfordshire County Council, which is to be sent to Government ministers to include Oxfordshire in any future devolution deal.

Motion on Private finance in Health Services – Full Council 10 December

Green Group at Vale of White Horse are bringing a motion on private finance within health services.

GP surgeries are private enterprises that take on NHS contracts, these contracts over a length of time provide GPs with certainty of what they can be paid per-patient. However, we are seeing more private companies dictating terms which make it unfeasible for GPs to take on surgeries given the current level of funding available from the NHS.

We have a situation where a developer promised GP surgery in a very large development in Didcot is now over 10 years overdue, the developer has put forward some money to build the facility, it has been passed to another company who continue to dictate a lease price that is completely unaffordable for GP to take on.

We think this needs to be challenged in council and the council should be being more proactive in raising this to government as we can see how private finance comes with terms that are unachievable.

See full Council papers:

<https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/documents/g3401/Agenda%20frontsheet%20Wednesday%2010-Dec-2025%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=0>

Joint Local Plan 2041

We have received several comments on whether the Vale has a local plan at present, this is creating a great deal of confusion, so we hope the following clarifies.

- The Vale has an Up-to-date and valid plan to 2031
- The Vale and South were asked by inspectors to “withdraw” the 2041 plan, as the inspector felt we had not met the “Duty to cooperate” specifically with Oxford City
- The Vale and South 2041 plan has **not** been withdrawn and sits with the inspectors to progress to the next stage or not.
- The government minister has written to inspectors, stating they will be scrapping the “Duty to cooperate” requirement.

Questions to cabinet on Council Tax arrears and enforcement practices

We have recently been supporting local families who have found themselves unable to pay council tax bills and in some cases being taken to court.

While much about council tax payments is set out in legislation, we are concerned about the support available to residents.

We as ward councillors will always support residents in difficult times in any way we can, however compassion should be the guiding principle of a council towards its residents, and we would expect to be involved in only the rarest of cases.

At December Council Kat is asking the cabinet member to confirm how much income the council is gaining from court fee income related to council tax arrears cases.

See full Council papers:

<https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/documents/g3401/Agenda%20frontsheet%20Wednesday%2010-Dec-2025%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=0>

Funds

Disabled Facilities Grant

Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire continues to provide funding for those in need of changes to their homes to cope with disabilities up to £50,000. There are several other grants and loans available for projects that fall outside of this such as Dementia support, Essential repair grants and Energy Saving grant.

If you are in need to make change to your home to continue living there and cannot afford to do so please take a look:

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/housing/help-with-improving-your-home/>

Consultations

Leisure and Playing Pitch Strategy

Open until: Tuesday, 23rd December

Parish and town councils will have received a consultation request on where your local area stands on facilities and access to them.

We strongly encourage all our parishes to respond and if possible, please do forward the responses directly so we can ensure we can represent your needs when an opportunity arises.

If you have not had a request, please do contact jointheconversation@southandvale.gov.uk