

Vale of White Horse District Councillors' Report

Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

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We have worked with a number of residents this month with queries related to planning enforcement, planning conditions and new estate construction and management.

The main message this month is for residents to ensure that they can now renew their brown bin subscription using the new online system, but help is available for residents for whom this is difficult. More below.

It's been great to speak to lots of people this month as we've delivered our regular update newsletter, and will help ensure that all residents have our contact details if needed.

Ward Overview

Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee

The next FATAC meeting is Monday 8 March, 10.00 am, in Faringdon Town Council offices. Residents are welcome to register to attend to speak to the committee. Minutes of previous meetings and agenda are available here: <https://www.faringdontowncouncil.gov.uk/council/minutes/joint-committees/>

Kat sits on the committee, I'm happy to be contacted with any issues. I will be asking (again) that OCC prioritise repairs to the dangerous potholes on the A420 around Acorn Bridge, and to investigate drainage of the constant flood on the eastbound lane in the dip between the B4508 Highworth Road junction and Cross Trees roundabout.

Buscot Wick Flooding – Environment Agency and OCC response

Kat has been supporting Cllr Thomas, OCC councillor for Faringdon ward, to get information from the Environment Agency about their understanding of repeated flooding in Buscot Wick. The Environment Agency have now responded and Cllr Thomas will share the information with residents and parish councils.

Council News

Vale District Council Budget

Given local authority finances nationally, we are pleased to know that Vale's finances are in relatively good shape. The budget included a further two years of funding for the community hub, which supports residents with cost of living, housing and wellbeing. We were disappointed – given what we considered a lack of focus on climate and environment in the budget – that our modest proposal to include additional funding for the Climate Action Fund to meet demand was rejected by the Liberal Democrat group.

Garden Waste Bin Permit Scheme

Vale of White Horse District Council is introducing a garden waste permit scheme from April 2025. Customers will receive a sticker permit for their bins to identify them as fully paid-up garden waste

customers. All existing customers will need to subscribe to the new permit payment system. Existing customers will be notified directly, with full information on the council websites and each house getting a bin hanger flagging the changes. The payment year will run from 1 April to 31 March each year.

The council is asking all renewals to be made online where possible, as they expect phone lines to be very busy.

We have received lots of queries about why there is no longer an option to pay by direct debit. Part of reason for this decision is the high rate of direct debit failure, and the amount of resource needed to chase these up. It is hoped that this system will be a fairer way to ensure that the waste teams know who has paid for green waste collections.

More information and the link to pay online is available here: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/gardenwaste

Housing Allocations Policy Review

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are seeking residents' views on proposed changes to their joint Housing Allocations Policy.

The councils maintain a housing register and advertise available social housing through a Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The Joint Housing Allocations Policy sets out the criteria to join the housing register and the rules for how social housing is allocated. The policy needs updating to reflect current housing priorities in the districts and a consultation is open until Tuesday 18 March 2025.

More information here: <https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/housing-and-environment/review-housing-allocations-policy/>

Local Elections on 1 May

There has now been confirmation that Oxfordshire's county council elections on 1 May will go ahead. The key change to the Shrivenham division since the last elections is that East and West Challow have been removed from the division.

The council is looking for people to work at the elections: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/local-democracy-and-elections/elections-and-voting/job-opportunities-at-elections/>

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee

We have been asked to include more information regarding the Council's climate work through the CEAC committee. Green Cllr Sarah James sits on the committee, and at the last meeting in December the committee considered the council's Draft Climate and Nature Action Plan and Biodiversity Audit Update. Minutes of that meeting are here:

<https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=608&MId=3303&Ver=4>. A recording of

the meeting can also be watched on the Council's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/N5m76QlqOL4?feature=shared>

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for 2 June 2025.

Funds

Connected Communities Fund

Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action have launched a fund to support local grassroots projects that create opportunities for older people and adults with additional needs; and promote socialising and building meaningful connections in the community. Categories include Community Based Socialising; Health & Wellbeing; Arts, Culture & Creative; Green/Environmental & Outdoor Activities; New Skills Learning.

Up to **£5,000 per project** is available. For full eligibility criteria and how to apply:

<https://ocva.org.uk/connected-communities-fund/>

Useful Council Links

- Flytipping, Littering and Abandoned Vehicles: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/environment-and-neighbourhood-issues/neighbourhood-services/littering-fly-tipping-and-dumping-waste/>
- Housing Team: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/housing/>
- Community Safety (anti-social behaviour, vulnerable people and domestic abuse): <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/community-help-and-safety/>
- Cost of Living Help: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/cost-of-living-crisis-advice-and-support/>
- Emergency Situations: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/community-support/emergency-situations/>