

REPORT FROM VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS (WATCHFIELD & SHRIVENHAM WARD) TO PARISH COUNCIL ASSEMBLIES 2019

Introduction

The past 12 months have again been challenging. We represent 12 Parishes covering a wide range of issues from planning through to waste. Simon continued as Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee. This Committee is responsible for ensuring compliance with principles and practice of good governance including the monitoring of financial arrangements. It also has a direct link to the Council's external Auditors. Prudent management has ensured that the Vale's finances are in a healthy position. Simon also continued as Chair of the Faringdon Area Grants Committee. Elaine as Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment has an extensive portfolio that includes Housing Needs, Environmental Protection, Food Safety, Waste, Car Parks, Mobile Home Parks, Licensing and Community Safety, Parks and Open Spaces.

This report which is the last under the current Vale administration covers the main updates for the whole of the Watchfield & Shrivenham Ward that we represent.

Planning

Planning issues have again been top of the agenda and we continue to do our best in representing the views of residents across the 12 Parishes. The Local Plan Part 1 was adopted in December 2016. The adoption of the Plan has enabled the Vale to refuse speculative applications that have been submitted. Examples include the application from Gladman for 85 dwellings on the land to the north of the Bovis development known as Townsend Place and the Linden Homes application for 136 dwellings on the golf course..

Local Plan Part 2. The Plan is currently with the Inspector. Following the formal public inspection the Inspector requested that a number of minor amendments be addressed. These required further public consultation and the plan has been re-submitted. The plan does not identify any strategic sites in the Western Vale.

Appeals – Currently there is only one appeal outstanding in the Ward. This will be considered by the Planning Inspectorate in due course.

Legal & General – Phase 1 for 240 dwellings has commenced. Agreement for a temporary access road from the A420 has been agreed and construction vehicles will commence using it shortly. In the longer term there will be a roundabout on the A420 which will enable the residents of the new developments to access the road directly rather than through the village. Legal & General have continued to hold regular progress meetings with the Parish Council and Ward Members.

Bovis – Townsend Road – Bovis has commenced constructing the 116 dwellings known as Townsend Place. They did submit a change of house style application to the Vale. However, this was refused as the 3 bed design could easily have been converted to a 4 bed and would then be in breach of the required allocation of 3 bed dwellings.

Taylor Wimpey - Longcot Road – A number of the houses are now occupied. Construction is progressing and many of the original issues have been dealt with.

Charles Church – Highworth Road – The construction of 35 dwellings is well on track. There have been complaints regarding the access from Stallpits Road and these are being dealt with.

Land South of Steeds Farm Gt. Coxwell – An Outline application for a further 125 dwellings has been submitted to the Vale. This application is in addition to the 200 that are already being constructed on part of this strategic site. Amended plans and documentation have been submitted and a viability assessment was submitted in early April of this year.

Lorry Park Chowle Farm Industrial Estate – An Outline application for 9 residential dwellings and 9 offices with associated parking was submitted almost a year ago. Since then amended plans have been submitted and are currently under consideration.

Swindon Eastern Villages - The impact of the start of the new “Eastern Villages” in Swindon are starting to take shape and will have a significant impact on our villages which cannot be underestimated. A total of 8000 dwellings will be built in 8 villages and South Marston will expand. In partnership with the County Council we continue to represent our residents and highlight the many issues that are of concern including the A420.

Recycling

The Vale has slipped from No.2 to No.4 in the whole of the country for the % of recycling material. It is unfortunate that the Vale has been unable to maintain its level of performance. This has been primarily due to contamination of recycling material. To assist residents with recycling the Vale has produced a recycling wheel. The wheel gives information on what can be put in to which bin. Supplies are available from Parish Councils and libraries and further supplies may be obtained from the Waste Team at the Vale.

Fly Tipping

The Vale continues to successfully prosecute individuals for fly-tipping. One of the recent prosecutions was a Faringdon resident who paid two unknown men £25 each to dispose of DIY rubbish., The rubbish was found dumped in two different places in Buscot. He admitted his mistake in not checking that the men had the correct licence and as a result he was fined over £1600.

Climate Emergency

At the February meeting of the full Council the Vale like many other Councils declared a Climate Emergency and agreed to:

*Ask the Leader to write to the Secretary of State to seek confirmation of the Government's intention to work with local government on climate change strategies. This the Leader has done and the letter may be viewed on the Vale's website.

*Review the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan

*Ensure that all Council policies are routinely reviewed and as far as possible the reporting templates for Council, Cabinet and Committees include an Environmental Impact section.

*Officers to provide costs and availability of training options for members and officers on how to promote carbon neutral policies for future consideration by Cabinet.

*Request the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment to bring a report to Council on the activities of the Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership of which the Vale is a member

*Continue the positive collaborative work with partners across the district, county and wider region to deliver widespread carbon reductions.

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

The Vale like other local authorities in Oxfordshire has discussed the proposal for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. However, to date there has been no formal consultation and until notification is received a full debate cannot begin. It must be recognised that the proposal is in its early stages and there is still considerable work to be undertaken.

The Vale has agreed:

*To make clear the Council's concerns regarding the potential impact on residents.

*Welcomes the commitment to greater investment by government in sustainable transport infrastructure options
and

*Commits to using all reasonable measures to alert residents to the public consultation.

Grants

Over the past four years the Vale has given grants of over £800,000 to local communities. Details of the Grants schemes are available on the Vale website.

Policing

As Ward Members we work closely with the local Neighbourhood Police Team. Elaine is a member of the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG). Although the Vale is identified as a low crime area the recent burglaries have obviously caused concern. There are a number of crime prevention initiatives that are available including Smart Water. You may not always see evidence of our local police but you can be rest assured that the Neighbourhood Team are out there keeping a watching brief in all our villages.

Conclusion

Along with your local Parish Councillors we work tirelessly for our communities and deal with numerous issues that affect the area.

We attend a variety of meetings and make representation to various Vale Committees, Swindon Borough Council, the County Council and other organisations. We work hard to get our voice heard and our views listened to.

We continue to provide assistance and advice to residents when they have any problems or concerns. We may not advertise what we do on a daily basis but as locals we have our local community at heart and will serve you all as best we can.

