CIVIL PARISH OF HARWELL

Annual Meeting of the Parish 2024

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Parish Council

The Parish Meeting is a chance for all our local groups and organisations to tell us what they have been doing this past year, and hopefully a bit of what they plan for the future. It is worth your time to have a read of the reports from each group that has been able to provide one.

The Parish Council has been quite busy this past year, starting with an election in May 2023 and the start of a new Council Term. Unfortunately there weren't enough Councillors to hold the Annual Council Meeting in May, so things were slightly delayed whilst the Vale of White Horse appointed District Councillors so the Annual Council Meeting could go ahead on the 1st June. Tracey Pearson was appointed as the Chair for the Year ahead with the outgoing Chair, J Hawthorne being appointed as Vice-Chair. Further Co-options ensued throughout the year, until the Council reached 9 members in November 2023. The Council still has 2 vacant seats, specifically for the Campus Ward and anyone interested joining the Council as a co-opted Councillor should contact the Clerk in the first instance to express their interest.

The Council said farewell to their long serving Clerk S Taylor in September after 18 years of service. The Council wishes them well in their retirement and thanks them for their work over the years. The Council appointed a Locum in October who supported the Council until February when they had to reduce their hours due to a new permanent role, but the Locum and the Chair have kept on top of the Council administration for the last couple of months in anticipation of a new Clerk being appointed at the Council meeting on the 9th April 2024. They will start their role in earnest on the 1st May 2024 and wish them well in their new role and look forward to working with them.

Going forward, we look forwarded to meeting more of the parishioners during our advertised open office hours. These will be confirmed with the new Clerk when they start and published on our *new* website. The keen eyed amongst you will have noticed the upgraded website now on www.HarwellParish.gov.uk. We do sill have information to transition across, so you many need to use the old website for some historical documents, but we hope you all enjoy the look and feel of our new website. The Council is always happy to receive suggestions on content, we may not be able to implement it all, but please contact the Clerk directly if you would like to see something which isn't there.

This year we have begun the long process of fully digitising all of our Cemetery Records. The cemetery software automatically links to our finance software to make invoicing a tracking of individual plots much simpler. Starting with the most recently used plots, we will work backwards through time until all of the records are digitised. We welcome all additional information relating to any of your loved ones plots, particularly updated contact details for plot owners!

I thank you for taking the time to read our report and attend the Annual Meeting of the Parish, this is the time for you as residents to come together and discuss the happenings in the Parish over the previous year and hopefully encourage greater participation in the various groups and organisations

We look forward to seeing you again next year.

Cllr Tracey Pearson
Chair of the Council

Financial Summary

At the time this report was issued, the FY 2023-2024 accounts had not been finalised. These will be available on the Parish Council Website as soon as possible., and likely approved by the Council at the Annual Meeting of the Council on the 14th May 2024.

Mrs L White

RFO (at time of issue of report)

County Councillor Report

What's been happening

The biggest change to the division in the period was the **Electoral Commission review**, which confirms that Hendreds & Harwell is one of the largest and growing divisions in Oxfordshire and as such in 2025 electoral year it will be split into 3, so 3 councilors will represent the area, and it combines / splits out with other areas….

1. Harwell, Western Valley – becomes one division
2. Charlton, Kingsgrove, Ardington & Lockinge, East and West Hendred, Chilton, Upton and Blewbury is another
3. And finally Steventon groups with Drayton, Sutton Courtney and Milton parishes for the final division.

As many of you will know, I have an ever-increasing workload and now you can see why. The reality has been I simply just haven't had enough time to do everything, and I have always prioritized Casework and individual needs as well as emergencies and large pending issues, sometimes over attending Parish Council meetings. I hope you will see that this is because our residents really matter, even though many of these are confidential matters I cannot discuss. I appreciate your understanding and am and have always been available rapidly by phone / text.

It wont surprise you to know I haven't been serving you all quietly, but I have had a major blip this first part of 2024, firstly a fire at a property we rent for my partners art and my pottery and we had to move out, and I have had whooping cough and am still getting better, 3 months later, just need less rain and mud. Meanwhile I will keep asking the questions no one else wants to ask and serving you the best I can. I have taken a break from Facebook for a while, as just find its overwhelming and not good for my headspace.

Another change was in **December 2023 I left the Group**, the administration group, of Liberal Democrats and continue to sit on OCC as an Independent. My frustration with poor decision making, strategy and direction was long voiced inside the group and I tried to influence where I could, but it was clear the voices of my residents and our rural communities were falling on deaf ears, especially around transport, roads and our most vulnerable. **I am now the Leader of TIVOO – The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire**, and will continue to represent in an open and transparent way. I have realized that politics doesn't help anyone, and we need more voices that are just about the right thing for our residents and not about getting reelected or political point scoring.

"Helping one person might not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person"

This May sees elections for the Police and Crime Commissioner. We have tried on several times in the division to get some actions on…

- Speeding and poor driver behaviours
- On street parking, blocking access for active travel users
- Anti Social Behaviours
- More police presence / preventative policing.

Please think about your community and who best can represent your views when you vote this may and please remember voter ID. This is a huge role, and also pays a huge amount of money for the individual, the website says £88,600 for PCC in Thames Valley!

Roads – we have had a long battle around the HIF1 infrastructure and its now in Public Inquiry. I have represented public views at the hearing and we expect an outcome end of the Summer 2024. HIF1 is a new proposed road from Western Valley / Valley Park to Culham, with bridges / fly overs. We all know the local congestion and flooding issues and this scheme is funded by government as part of the Tory led growth deal, which resulted in the huge number of new homes in the locality. More info when I get it! You can watch the inquiry here - https://www.youtube.com/@HIF1Didcot – I spoke on Day 2 (first speaker).

Budgets – I am afraid I didn't agree with the new OCC budget and the final deal done with Labour and the Lib Dem Green administration. I had no issues with the administrations budget, but once again Labour came in with fantasy spends on feasibility studies and cuts in real time costs to Adult Social care. Its hugely disappointing after a nearly 10 hour meeting, that the ideas of all groups were not considered, **all** the main parties had some brilliant options for the residents of Oxfordshire, but as always politics is a horrid game which doesn't put people first! I voted against the final budget.

Children – I have worked closely since September 2022 with parents, carers and users of Oxfordshire's SEND services (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and now sit on the new EYP (Education and Young Persons) Scrutiny Committee. In September 2023 Oxfordshire failed its Ofsted on SEND alongside the Health Authority (as there's joined services between health and education). I continue to voice concerns at all levels and support some of our families in the division on a daily basis. It's a hugely complex area and once again plenty of government failings, but, there is plenty of issues inside OCC and with a new Director of service we are starting to see some rapid changes, although not rapid enough for many of our families with complex needs.

SESRO – we continue our fight and I continue to voice concerns at the highest levels, this could be a report in its own right. I recently spoke at the Clay Compaction Trial planning application which was called into Planning Committee and was very disappointed by the material planning considerations by the committee members, and it was passed pending county archology recommendations due to a find. Thames Water continue to pollute the Letcombe and Ginge brooks and frankly are leaving our infrastructure to crumble. I have written to the Secretary of State to call for a Public Inquiry into the Thames Water Management Plan and got a cut and paste reply, and similarly continue to call for the MP, David Johnston, to meet with local residents, neither are coming to fruition. I promise to keep trying and keep SESRO on the agenda at OCC, where the council remains in staunch objection.

Flooding – We have and continue to suffer from freak weather events, and this has had a continued impact on Steventon especially. In January 2024 after Storm Henk, I organized a public meeting and we formed a Community flood group. Things continue to build and I couldn't be prouder of what the parish is achieving and the number of volunteers taking the reins. We have more to do, but we have a foundation and have met with the Environment Agency and councils around remits and working together, funnily enough Thames Water have been late to the table and lack lustre, despite the amount of human effluent we have had in homes, gardens and streets.

Citizenship – I am a big believer that we are the answer to most of the worlds problems and that the system is broken beyond repair. I am hugely proud of being a part of helping some set up (and volunteering* when I can at…)

1. Roots & Shoots Steventon – Community café and allotment
2. HEG Community Larder and Café – East Hendred
3. Harwelcome – Harwellian (Harwell) – and a special thanks to ex Cllr Sarah Medley for all her hard work and Debbie G!
4. Hendred Community Cinema nights
5. Upton Community events – well done Nicola for all you and the teams hard work!
6. The Chiton Market is making its appearance again, and is always a wonder on the triangle!

I really want to know what's going on in your parishes, so please do let me know, and if I can be of any assistance.

Councillor Priority Fund – this sadly looks like its coming to an end, which is a tragedy, as it's the only lever we have to help, as councilors, small groups, I do have some funding left, and will share my spending soon, so far an Accessible Trampoline in Chilton, Mental Health First Aider training for teachers in the division, Compost Toilet for Parkinson.me in Ardington, West Hendred Village Hall – hire costs for small groups and Set up costs for Steventon Community Flood Group. Do chat with me, I have allowed some money for Toad Ladders too for Ardington Toad Patrol.

Steventon Bridge – yet another failure of multiple agency ownership / operation, the last correspondence I got from chasing up works (remember we have had a channel now since Dec 2021), was as follows; ' *The design of the proposed repairs is largely completed, but the works programme is down to the available possessions and Milestone our term Consultant/Contractor have been struggling to get a response from Network Rail. Milestone are seeking a response again from Network Rail, before escalating through the County Council to try and get a response. If only Network Rail rules of the route possessions are available, i.e. Saturday night into Sunday mornings, then it is expected that 25 of these possessions will be required to complete the work. The works are desired to start this summer, however even rules of the route possessions generally need to be booked at least 16 weeks in advance. It is hoped that we can carryout the work on the back of longer planned possessions by Network Rail, such that far fewer rules of the route possessions will be required. To book our own longer possessions, Network Rail typically require 2 years notice, with weekend long possessions typically costing around £300,000.There are also likely to be complications over the Public Liability Insurance requirements for these works, for which the Council and our contractors are normally required to have £10m insurance cover, but Network Rail are likely to seek higher cover in this instance, which will add significant cost and complications which may also delay the programme. i.e. for other planned works Network Rail are requiring £150m PLI insurance which is costing an extra £380,000. The proposed*

works to Steventon bridge are probably higher risk to Network Rail than these other works, for which a suitable PLI limit, which primarily relates to risk of disrupting train operators still needs to be agreed."

I can provide you with a more definitive update once a suitable response from Network Rail has been obtained.

If you are reading this in the same vein that I am, this is utterly bonkers especially given the last line access, that Network Rail arrived late, and the team got barely a few hours work done. Its just another shambles of private v's public operating.

Highways – we have several schemes we are waiting on consultation, including the West Hendred crossing, which is stalled. I am trying to find out why, appears it's the Milestone contractor and further tree surveys…. I am pushing weekly. Blewbury, pending again more safety reviews of Bessel's Way and London Road / A417 for crossing for children, I will keep asking, the new way we are supposed to communicate with Highways isn't working in my opinion and I am pleased to see Cllr Waine has put a question to council for tomorrow saying exactly this (April Full Council).

POTHOLES – you may have seen the notice that OCC budgeted an extra £7m and this is being rolled out now. https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/7-million-road-resurfacing-programme-to-begin-next-month/

I have been impressing that what we really need is the Land Rental and also we need more foremen and people who inspect the Highway after permits have been issued, as contractors and utility companies leave things in a mess!

Active Travel - Finally you may already be aware of this, and if it is of interest, colleagues in our Active Travel team host a monthly Active Travel Roundtable which is open to all. The meeting is intended for those interested in walking, cycling and wheeling across Oxfordshire - to share news, spark debates and foster collaboration between residents, officers and councillors. To be included in the Teams invitation for these sessions, please email Isabela.Cull@Oxfordshire.gov.uk.

We have completed the Upton cycle project and crossing and am in constant debate about the Icknield way. Also the Steventon Active Travel up to the lights and down to Milton Interchange will be completed by end of 2024.

Full Council and motions – I have pitched many motions and seconded a fair few in the last 12 months, in fact tomorrow (16th April) I am seconding and proposing motions, one on removal of community beds post hospital care and the other around the voice of the young person in SEND improvement. I have posted questions from the Steventon Bridge to Lack of transparency and openness.

Didcot Healthcare / GWP Medical Centre – I am sure Debra and Hayleigh will have updated as much of this sits with the District, but I am 1) appalled that CIL money has been committed without a public say so, or even the parishes, towards a gap in funding, and effectively to pay a developer to do their job…(and they will own and lease the building to the healthcare service so they will make ££) and that 2) I have been trying to get the CEO of the ICB to meet with Upton / Harwell and Western Valley parishes but they think the microsite is enough to answer all our questions, I have pushed back! Here is the ICB microsite - https://www.bucksoxonberksw.icb.nhs.uk/our-places/great-western-park-didcot-gp-services/

OALC – I am the Oxfordshire CC representative, and I am really excited about the Town and Parish Charter, and what this can mean to support local councilors, I am concerned through that Vale of White Horse seems to have direction from their leader not to support, which is of a great concern.

Smoke Free Oxfordshire – I am a huge supporter of this, as an Ex Smoker, have a read….https://www.oalc.org.uk/local-news

Urgent from OCC

Travel focus group participants needed

We want to know how residents feel about travel in Oxfordshire. We're inviting residents to take part in various online and in-person discussion groups and we're offering a £50 voucher to say thank you for taking part (terms and conditions apply). People can sign up for the following groups on Let's talk Oxfordshire: young people aged 18 - 24 years; families; adults aged 65+ years; commuters; and businesses.

https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/travel-focus-groups

Including Everyone 2024 - 28. We're refreshing our equalities, diversity and inclusion framework, known as 'Including Everyone'. The framework will set out our vision and priorities to work towards to achieve our goals. To help steer our direction, we want to hear about residents' experiences and what they think it's most important for us to work on. The survey on Let's talk Oxfordshire is live until Tuesday 30 April.

https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/including-everyone-2024

For now, its my honor to serve you and I will hopefully see you all soon!

Cllr Sally Povolotsky FRSA

Hendreds and Harwell Division

District Councillor Report – Blewbury & Harwell Ward

Here is our annual report for 2023/24. We will outline a few highlights of the past 12 months, some achievements and what the big ticket items for the near future are.

As you may realise, the Vale of White Horse District Council had elections in May 2023 where Hayleigh was re-elected and Debra newly elected to represent the ward of Blewbury and Harwell – which includes parishes of Blewbury, Harwell, Chilton, Upton and new for this year, Western Valley.

As in previous years, the concerns of residents are often centred around the delivery of amenities for the area as we grow and in particular, healthcare. At the July full council meeting, Hayleigh raised a question to cabinet members about the planned Great Western Park (GWP) Health Centre (see written Q and A here) and back in December, Debra spoke at the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting to raise the issue of healthcare provision in and around the Didcot area, where she challenged Dan Leveson, the Place Director for the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) to give reassurances that the health centre planned for GWP will be built and asked him what is causing the delay. The officers at the council have been working closely with the healthcare provider and we are pleased to say that there has been significant progress behind the scenes, which you can read about later in the report.

This year, Debra served as cabinet member for Leisure Centres and Community Buildings and Hayleigh as Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee and a member of the scrutiny committee.

We would like to thank the individuals and organisations who give so much of their time to support the community, as it is you that makes the community what it is. Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report. *We use monthly updates to keep you updated on our activities and general council news. We also post on our councillor Facebook Pages:*
www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh & www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell

The best way to contact us with any issues or concerns is via email *hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk* and *debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk*

Cost of Living Support

If you or someone you know is in need of support, a reminder that the council has put together a Cost of Living Help webpage for more information about financial and housing support, and local community food services. You can also contact the council's Community Support Hub for practical support and advice: call 01235 422 600 (Mon to Thurs 8.30-5pm and Fridays 8.30-4.30pm) or visit www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/communityhub. Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South and Vale can provide you with free, confidential advice via 0808 278 7907. Vale Community Impact can provide free advice too, call them on 01235 765348

Local Issues

Didcot & Villages Healthcare

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, known as BOB ICB, is responsible for delivering healthcare in the local area.

BOB ICB approved a business case for the project in January 2024 which reaffirms their commitment to deliver the health centre and agrees the revenue funding. Woodlands Medical Centre have been selected to

run the surgery and the ICB have selected and are working with a third party developer. Read more about the business case approval here, on the ICB's website.

In terms of what we as councils can influence, the Vale is currently working with Taylor Wimpey on measures to take transfer of the site. Once the site is transferred to the council, we will enter into an agreement for lease with the Woodland Medical Centre's third-party primary care developer who will develop the facility (upon grant of planning permission) and then lease it to Woodlands Medical Centre.

A deed of variation was agreed on 7th March. The variation adds additional information to ensure that the health centre can be delivered using the third party developer approach, which would not have been possible under the original S106 (a legal document outlining what the developer provides).

On 1st March, the Cabinet member for affordable housing, infrastructure, development and governance at the Vale, Cllr Sue Caul, made the decision to approve the use from the 20% CIL public healthcare allocation of the infrastructure proportion. CIL stands for Community Infrastructure Levy and is money collected from developers. It can be spent on any number of local projects and this pot of money is allocated generically for healthcare. This is in addition to the S106 money ringfenced specifically for the GWP surgery. Click here to read more about it.

The council have been working with BOB ICB and encouraging them to be more transparent and share information with the public. For now, there is this dedicated microsite.

The next steps are for the land to transfer to the Vale and for BOB ICB to work with their developer to submit a planning application for the surgery, which we hope to see both happening in the next few months.

Valley Park

Valley Park is a proposed new housing development of 4254 homes, situated on land to the west of Great Western Park and east of the A34, which received outline planning permission in 2021.

In our monthly parish reports we provide an overview of the current live planning applications for Valley Park. There often are several live applications relating to the development, however those labelled 'RM' i.e. 'Reserved Matters' are typically the most noteworthy as they request planning permission for specific parcels of housing on the development. Residents can provide comments on these applications.

Despite the outline permission going through almost three years ago, permissions for homebuilding are only just starting to be given. A parcel of homes for Persimmon was given permission last year, and at the time of writing, the first parcel of Taylor Wimpey homes will go to planning committee in mid-April for a decision. Part of the reason that these parcels take so long to get permission is due to the statutory consultation period – the period of time that residents and specific bodies (such as Environment Agency or Highways) can comment and feedback on applications. The officers go through all the feedback and also check if the application complies with both national planning policy as well as our own local planning policy and then they ask the applicants to make amendments to comply with this. This can often take several rounds before there is an application which meets our standards.

For example, the most recent parcel of Taylor Wimpey homes will be much more environmentally friendly, with solar panels and heat pumps instead of gas boilers.

Boundary Review

The Local Government Boundary Commission is reviewing the ward boundaries within the District Council, to make sure councillors represent approximately the same number of electors, and that ward arrangements

help the council work effectively. It wants to be sure that its proposals reflect community ties and identities. The Commission is the independent body making this decision, but takes feedback from residents and the council itself on what changes, if any to make. Changes made will be in place at the next local election for the District Council, which is May 2027.

Climate & Environment

Climate Action Fund 2023/2024

A total of 14 organisations including parish councils, climate community groups, a pre-school and a drama group were collectively offered more than £56,000 from the Vale's Climate Action Fund to help with a wide variety of projects, which aimed to save energy, help nature recovery or educate residents on how they can help tackle climate change. The projects listed below are the ones from our ward area.

Organisation	Description of project
Blewbury Parish Council	Installation of at least two electric vehicle public charging points at Blewbury Village Hall, to assist EV users to charge their vehicles in the village.
Little Pippins Pre-School in Harwell	Installation of solar panels on Little Pippin's pre-school building.
The Harwellian Club	Project to set up and install interactive displays showing information and advice about the Harwellian Club's energy usage and the recently installed solar panels at the Harwellian social club.

So if you are a community group planning a project with a climate action focus then please check our grants page www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/grants. This years' fund opens on Friday 3rd May.

Leisure centres install fan-tastic new energy saving measures

In December 2023, the Leisure Facilities Team presented a report to the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee about the fantastic work they have been doing to decarbonise our leisure centres. The council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and pledged to become a carbon neutral council by 2045 and to have a 75% reduction in carbon emissions in the district by 2030. Our leisure centres made up 51% of the council's carbon emissions in 2019/20.

Since then the council has successfully applied for and been awarded SALIX funding from the government to add solar panels and heat pumps to our leisure centre buildings. Whilst also progressing smaller projects such as updating the lighting to LED lighting and thinking of ways to be more efficient with energy usage. For example, the council has just completed the installation of 11 destratification fans at the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, in Abingdon. These are designed to stabilise the temperature at the pool by deflecting hot air, which has risen to top of the high roof, back down to the lower area where the pool users are.

Before the fans were installed, the pool's heating system had to work harder to maintain a comfortable temperature for swimmers at pool level, while the heated air naturally rose to the highest point in the building and heat was then lost through the roof.

The Leisure Team have used a combination of capital expenditure where projects are smaller, and S106, CIL and grants for larger projects. This has enabled the Leisure Team to ensure the additional capital has not been used from our reserves and maximised the use of developer funding.

Current data indicates that these smaller projects have already saved 113,152 KWh per year and with the larger projects, overall annual consumption will have reduced to 2.03 kWh per year from the 7.41 kWh per year seen in 2019/20. Over 72% reduction in kWh consumption will have been achieved by 31st Marh 2025.

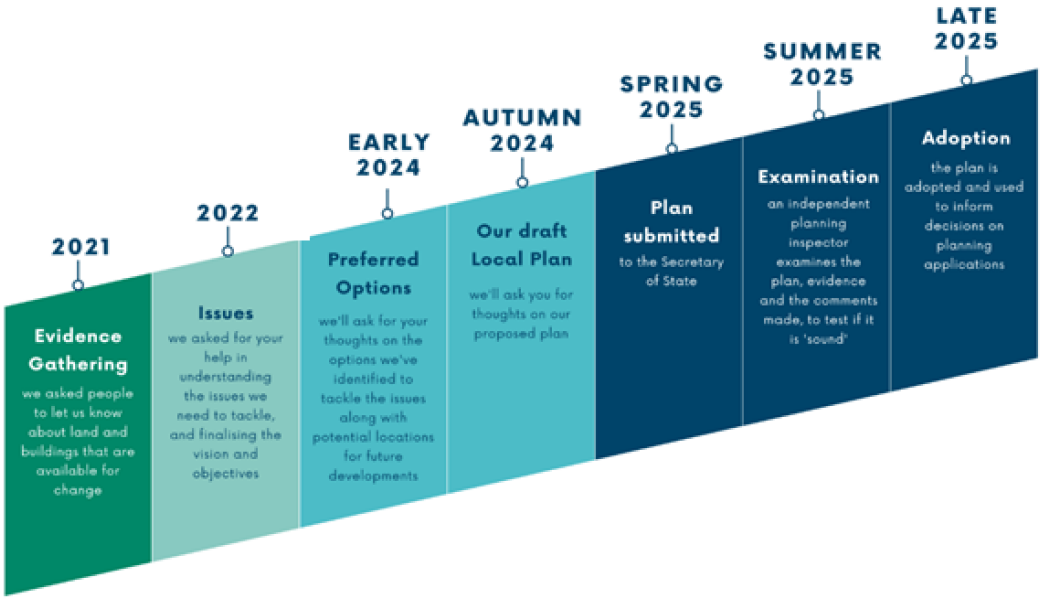
Council News

Joint local plan

Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire district councils are working together to deliver the Joint Local Plan, which will guide what kinds of new housing and jobs are needed and where they should go.

Earlier this year, the two district councils collected the community's feedback on councils' proposed plans and draft policies across a range of topics, including climate, housing and jobs, environment, community facilities and more.

Determined to reach more people than ever before, the councils used innovative online engagement tools and held a variety of community events in unique and interesting locations to reach people who haven't commented on local plans in the past, as well as those who regularly engage with council planning consultations. Testament to these innovative methods, around half of those responding to a *Joint Local Plan in a Nutshell survey* said it was their first-time taking part in a local plan consultation.



It doesn't stop there, this is just one stage of the process and there will be more opportunity to engage with the creation of the plan to make it the best it can be. The diagram demonstrates that the next step, later this year, is to ask for your feedback on the draft plan before it is submitted to the secretary of state. The policies that go into this plan, once adopted, are the basis for future planning decisions and any planning application that is submitted, whether for something small, like one home, or whole new estates.

Council Budget 2023/24

Despite major challenges, including below inflation funding increases, the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing economic and political uncertainty, thanks to careful financial management, the council has guaranteed vital public services, such as the district's Community Hub which provides support to residents who are struggling financially, and will continue to invest in key areas which benefit people across the district.

For 2024-25, council tax for services provided by Vale of White Horse District Council has been set at £156.69 for a Band D property for the entire year. Vale residents will therefore continue to pay one of the lowest rates in the country for services provided by a shire district and significantly less than the equivalent fee paid by those living in Oxford.

The district council's services are funded, in part, by only a small portion (7 per cent) of the total council tax paid by Vale households. This represents excellent value for money for residents, helping to pay for services, such as: household waste and recycling collections, community support, leisure services, parks and play areas, housing services, planning services, environmental health and licensing. For the detail of the budget, read the papers on the Vale Website here.

The annual council tax bills are going out this month and the councils have put together these videos as a handy explainer to show you who provides which services and where the money goes.

Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and Cllr Debra Dewhurst

Blewbury & Harwell Ward

Harwell Community Primary School

As a community school, we are always pleased to be involved with the wider village community.

In the first month of the school year, we welcomed Harwell Gardening Club to host the Annual Village Produce Show. This is always a delightful event and it is wonderful to see all the creativity and skill on show in the school hall from all ages in the village community. Every child in the school takes part as each class chooses a 'class from the programme' to enter and creates a display of individual entries.

In the Autumn Term, this year, we were really pleased to work with Harwell Bowls Club and Vale of White Horse District Council to run an extra curricular bowls activity for children in Years 3 to 6. This was very successful and we look forward to this restarting hopefully after Easter.

The wider community are invited to our Christmas Fair when the Harwell School Association works closely with the fundraising team from Little Pippins PreSchool. The Christmas Tree Festival attracts entries from organisations across the village. We also enjoy our carol singing around the village - twice this year with Year 4 before their performance of the Mummer Play and Year 6 as part of their Lantern Parade.

The school enjoys supporting the Feast, taking part in the float procession and providing the may Queen and Attendants from our Year 6 class. Each year, the school council attends the Armistice Day Service on the High Street at the war memorial whilst pupils also take part in the Sunday parade as members of organisations such as Rainbows, Brownies, Beavers and Cubs.

Our school choir 'Harwell Harmonies' visited The Harwellian Club in December to sing to those having their Christmas Lunch and also sang as part of the village Carol Service at St Matthews Church.

The wider community uses our site facilities, be that the fire pit, swimming pool, school hall or our Artificial Grass Pitch. Users include: Rainbows, Brownies, Squirrels, Cubs, Scouts, grassroots football teams, Dance School, Vikings re-enactment, Harwell Gardening Club and local swim schools.

We are delighted by the support we receive from the wider community - the gardening club who help with our school garden, welcoming children to join them; volunteer readers across the school; the WI who help at our Christmas Fair; Oxford County Construction who so generously provided lighting for the Fair; the Church Holiday Club and our School Governors who are all volunteers..

Jane Moreton
Harwell School Business Manager

Bagg's Tree Buskers

The Bagg's Tree Buskers continue to play their jazzy music, notably to lead the Parade of Floats at the Harwell Feast. As well as the Feast, the Buskers played at three other Village events in 2023 and one other summer fete. Not as many events as in some previous years, but we do also try to get together to play and practice most weeks.

Anyone interested in knowing what and how we play can find some videos on Youtube, for example https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIdF0r8VEqc

Harwell Parish History Group

In the year to March 2004 the HPHG has been its usual lively self. We have listened to visiting speakers and talks by our own members during March to May, and September to October, including:

- The Kennet and Avon Canal, Past and Present. by Charlie East, Volunteer Boatmaster, Kennet & Avon Canal Trust.
- Garnets and Anglo-Saxon Jewellery by Sally Spencer FGA, DGA.
- The Monarch's Way by William Jackson
- From Michael Faraday and Ada Lovelace to Tim Berners-Lee The 200 Year History of the Internet by Professor Mike Lockwood
- A Brief History of Long Wittenham. By Janet Haylett, Long Wittenham Historical Society.
- Leather's Lucky Landscape: medieval and modern manufacture in Abingdon by Patricia Cooke.

The programme for March/April/May 2024 includes talks on Commonwealth War Graves, Adnams Farmhouse Revisited and Capability Brown's work at Radley. All talks are in the Cherry Hall, on the third Wednesday of 6 months of the year. Members of HPHG (£12.00 p.a.) free; visitors, very welcome, pay £3.00.

We surround the Village Hall foyer with poster exhibitions- at present we have displays on the theme of Famous Harwellians Past and Present, and on the restoration of the 1703 church clock. Prior to this we covered Royal Heraldry, and Coronations Past and Present. (Since 2014 we have created nearly 600 posters on local and national history.)

During the winter and summer breaks between talks we issue an online magazine.

We always contribute a page on an historical topic to the Harwell News.

At present the Vale and Downland Museum is setting up a newsletter and exploring ways of co-operation between history groups and The Museum. We are supporting this venture.

Jane Card and Malcolm Thick both published articles in the Oxfordshire Local History Journal, which has been revived under a new editor. Jane is on the board which assess papers submitted.

"Small Change": the Hanson trade token.

HPHG has just acquired at auction a very small coin! The picture below shows it next to a modern two-pence piece. Strictly speaking, the acquisition is not a coin, but a trade token. Why are we excited about this very small round piece of metal? It is because the token is dated 1666 and was issued by 'John Hanson of Harwell, Berks'; it is in very good condition for its age and it is extremely rare.

Trade tokens were issued in the seventeenth century as small change. Between 1648 and 1672 the government did not mint copper farthings and there was, as a result, a severe shortage of small denomination coins. A farthing in 1648 is the equivalent to approximately 63p today. Imagine not having a coin of a lower denomination than £1.26p (a halfpenny), and with no credit cards fill the gap! Traders found it difficult to trade so some issued their own farthings as a consequence. These were usually only useable at the shop of the trader who issued them but, if the business was sound, people were willing to accept them elsewhere. Some towns issued their own farthings, usable in all shops in the town.

Not much is known about John Hanson. He was alive in 1672 when a relative, John Hanson of Blewbury, describes him in his will as 'my Trusty and well beloved Kinsman John Hanson of Harwell in the county of Berks Mercer'. This is the only record of his occupation. Mercers dealt in fine cloth, but in small towns and villages, they traded in smaller items of clothing, more like haberdashers. He probably often gave out his small coins as change but few have survived. If other traders in Harwell - bakers, tailors, and the like - also issued their own farthings, none are known today.

Hanson had 6 girl children and one boy who died at birth or soon after. The surname is not local; the heaviest concentration of Hansons is found in Lancashire. MFT



The Hanson Trade Token (Right) and next to a 2p piece for comparison.

HPHG 10th Anniversary

Harwell has for a long time contained excellent family and local historians. The village's millennium celebration in 1985 saw the production of the illustrated "Harwell: village for a thousand years", the full text of which is available on https://www.village4a1000years.com/the-book/ In the early 1960s, Anthony Fletcher, who later held professorships at three universities and other posts of distinction, used C 16th probate inventories from Harwell to produce "Elizabethan Village". This schoolbook was part of a then famously innovative, in depth, approach to history teaching.

Yet it was not until 2014 that HPHG was set up, linked with the refurbishment of the Village Hall. So far, it has run a programme of 6 talks per year, mounted 3 exhibitions, created nearly 600 colour posters on local and national topics for the Village Hall foyer, responded to requests from Australia and the USA for information about Harwellian ancestors, and always contributed to the Harwell News. Publicity posters showing all our past talks will appear soon in a new display in Village Hall foyer. In the meantime, the steering group would welcome new researchers and helpers with open arms !

Malcolm & Jane
Harwell Parish History Group

Harwell Royal British Legion Report

Our main activities are the Remembrance Commemorations and Poppy Appeal in November and D Day Service in June.

ARMISTICE DAY AND REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY COMMEMORATIONS

We assist Harwell Parish Council to organize the annual Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday Services at the High Street War Memorial, in co-operation with Harwell Church.

ARMISTICE 2023: The Commemoration was led by the Branch Chairman, and included the last post and two minutes silence. About 30 Legion members, school pupils and villagers attended.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2023: The Parade marched from Townsend to the High Street Memorial. The Guest of Honour was Angus Horner, Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire. Legion Members, Local Council representatives, Scout, Guide Army and Air cadet groups paraded, including 7 new organisations represented. The Service was conducted for the first time by Rev Jeremy Parsons, and was attended by several hundred villagers. £199.05 was collected for the Poppy Appeal.

Following this the parade marched to Harwell Church for a service, which was followed by a short commemoration at the Commonwealth War Graves in the Cemetery, led by the Branch Chairman. Our sincere thanks go to all who helped and attended to pay tribute to the fallen.

This year's services will be held on Sunday 10th and Monday 11th November. We would welcome more representatives of local organisations to join us in laying a wreath.

D DAY SERVICE AT THE RAF HARWELL MEMORIAL STONE, HARWELL CAMPUS

The Branch organizes the annual Commemoration with Harwell and Chilton Churches, by kind permission of the Campus Management.

2023 SERVICE: The Commemoration was led by Rev. Pam Rolls. 38 Wreaths were laid by RBL County, Branches and Veterans Organisations from across Berkshire and Oxfordshire and on behalf of the local communities and on-site businesses, led by the Guest of Honour, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Oxfordshire Mr Angus Horner.

Cadets from Wantage and Didcot ATC Squadrons, and for the first time Neville Company Army Cadets formed a Guard of Honour for the 22 Standards on Parade.

The event included a fly past by a former Army Air Corps aircraft. £85.30 was collected for the Poppy Appeal. Harwell Branch thanks all who participated and helped make the day a success.

The D DAY 80th Anniversary Commemoration will be on Saturday 8th June 2024. Details to follow.

HELP WANTED:

We are looking for a Branch Standard Bearer for all Commemorations, and a bugler for the D Day Service to play the Last Post and Reveille. Please contact Ceremonial Officer Peter Davies on Harwell.vicechairman@RBL.community.

POPPY APPEAL

The 2023 house to house, school and business collections raised **£ 1,528.60** in Chilton Village and the Curie Avenue shops, and **£ 1,740.20** in Harwell Village and the Campus businesses. Thank you to all who helped.

More House-to-House collectors are always welcome. Please contact Hazel Benton (Chilton) on hazel.benton@btinternet.com or Peter Cox (Harwell) on Harwell.secretary@RBL.community.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open whether or not you have been in the armed services. Please see our website **harwellrbl.co.uk** for further details and information on other activities.

BRANCH COMMITTEE

We'd happily welcome any Harwell Branch members onto the Branch Committee, as it is the Committee that makes these events happen. We have vacancies on the Committee for those who want to get more involved or simply to have better engagement with how the Harwell RBL Branch runs. Please contact Harwell.secretary@rbl.community.

Peter Cox

Harwell RBL Branch Secretary and Poppy Appeal Organiser Harwell

Harwell WI

WI meetings

WI Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month (except August) where there is always a warm welcome, new friends or old, in a friendly supportive environment with lots of laughter too. Meetings are open to all women over 18 years of age and feature a speaker or organised activity and a chat over a hot drink and biscuit.

We had a wide range of subjects last year: - Sustainable Harwell, Fairtrade, Street Photography, Oxford's Penicillin, the River Thames to Oxford, Morris Minors in the media, crime author, Olivia Kiernan, from Chiropractor to author.

Martin Sirot Smith educated us about Sulgrave Manor and the Washington Family. Jane Abbott set the mood for our Christmas Party with Christmas themed questions. The life of Aphra Behn, female spy, was presented by historian, Jane Card. Jane Robinson told of women who forged careers in male dominated fields "Ladies Can't Climb Ladders". In 2023, there were four very successful trips, a Spring walk to Nettlebed, afternoon tea at Chilton Garden Centre, a trip on the Kennet and Avon Canal Hungerford in August, and a Walking Tour of Oxford in the Autumn.

A yearly highlight is Fiona Pryor's Garden Party with cupcakes and Prosecco. Then we round the year off with a bring and share Christmas party

Crafts and Creativity by members

Two Blankets were made for a much-loved WI member.

Harwell WI Float was created for the parade at Harwell Feast.

The **Knit and Natter group** was busy making baby blankets for SSNAP and Tumaini sweaters for Tanzanian orphans.

In July, we made our Hare and entered it in the first **Harwell Hare Trail**.

We decorated the **WI Christmas Tree** for Little Pippins Tree Festival.

Community Action

Joining Harwell WI gives the opportunity to be active in the Village community and wider. We sponsored an Opal Plum tree in the Harwell Community Orchard.

We ran the **Christmas Café** at Harwell School Christmas Fair and baked cakes for the Harwell Feast teas and the **Christmas Craft Fair** as usual.

We donated Gift Bags of necessities to **SOFEA food bank** in Didcot and planted Spring bulbs at the Recreation Ground.

We have groups who sing and read with residents of **Alma Barn Lodge Care Home**

Our members did well at the **Harwell Produce Show** in September.

We joined the Blewbury WI stall at **Didcot Health and Wellbeing** event in November. Tuesday's coffee morning at Bizzy Bees in Great Western Park and Friday's in the Harwellian are well attended by members.

Communication with members

Snapshot, our monthly newsletter, informs members of dates. Birthday cards are given out. We held a **New Members' Meeting** at the Harwellian.

Publicity posters for WI meetings were put up in the village with the aim of encouraging new members. It worked. We had 13 new members in 2023 bringing the total to 65 full members, so we now have the same number we had in 2019.

The wider scope of being a Harwell WI member

As part of the Didcot Group of WIs we have an opportunity to join and take part in local sharing social events and talks.

As part of **Oxfordshire Federation of WIs** we have access to a wide range of courses from training in WI matters to crafts, visits to places of interest and holidays.

As part of the **National Federation of WIs** we can be part of a movement that makes a difference, remember Keep Britain Tidy?

In 2024 the Resolution is to campaign for Dental Health for All.

There is also national WI activity which all members can support in person or by petition, e.g. against Climate change, Gender Based Violence and more.

Penny Marsh and Claire Storey