District Councillor Update for Hendreds Ward – October 2026

Cllr Sarah James

Sarah's latest news in Hendreds Ward

I continue to support residents with issues they bring to me. Residents and Parish Councils are always welcome to get in touch on Sarah.James1@whitehorsedc.gov.uk or 07811 085661 (WhatsApp or phone).

Council officers visit Hendreds chalk streams

I invited Roselle Chapman and Dominic Lamb from the Nature Recovery and Climate team at Vale of White Horse DC to come and visit some of our chalk streams in Hendreds ward. Chalk streams are important, globally rare habitats and we have several in our villages: Hendred Brook, Ginge Brook, Ardington Brook, Lockinge / Betterton Brook and Goddard's Brook.

Vale of White Horse District Council has recognised the importance of chalk streams in the area and committed to seeing what action it can take to help to protect them, so this was a first conversation to better understand the challenges facing our precious chalk streams in Hendreds ward.

Great Western Park Health Centre land transfer

The transfer of land and money for the health centre, from the developer to Vale of White District Council, was completed on 16/09/2026. This is an important and essential step towards the creation of the new health centre.

I delayed reporting this last month as councillors were requested to wait until Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (ICB) published this news. They are responsible for the provision of the health centre. They have still not updated their website reporting on the project, and I have since seen this in the public domain, so I'm including it this time anyway.

The Thames Valley ICB website that should provide the latest information on this vital project is here - https://www.thamesvalley.icb.nhs.uk/about-us/improving-our-estates-within-the-thames-valley-icb .

Valley Park Health Care Provision

Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (ICB) are also responsible for using developer contributions to provide additional health care services to accommodate residents of the Valley Park development. I expect that access to health care for residents in the east of Hendreds Ward would be impacted by any delay, as has been the case with the delayed GWP health centre provision.

Vale of White Horse District Council have no direct role in health care provision but do have an interest in services for residents, so I asked a question at our October Council meeting to get an update in the public record. You can see my question and the response here (question R) - https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/documents/b10841/Written%20responses%20to%20questions%20Wednesday%2021-Oct-2026%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=9

In summary, the developer is expected to offer very soon to the ICB the choice of a plot of land for a health centre plus money, or a larger sum of money to fund increased health care nearby. VWHDC is liaising regularly with the developer and with the ICB to encourage the ICB to be ready to receive the offer and to make their decision. They wrote to the Chief Executive of the ICB in October 2025 to flag the timescales and the need for ongoing and proactive discussion to establish the ICB's strategy and commitment to the delivery of health facilities at Valley Park.

I remain concerned that there is not much evidence that Thames Valley ICB is primed and ready to make a better job of this than they have done in Great Western Park. I'm grateful that officers are going above and beyond the responsibilities of VWHDC to give the ICB every opportunity to plan ahead and get this right.

Landscaping complete following enforcement action

A breach of condition notice was served by Planning Enforcement on the Russet Drive / Bartlett Place / Comice Way estate in Milton Heights. I'm pleased to report that the enforcement has been effective and the landscaping work is now complete.

The action was to replace all trees, shrubs and hedges that are missing or of an incorrect species, have died or have been seriously damaged or destroyed with an equivalent number of new trees or shrubs of the same species shown on the soft landscaping plans (P18/V0386/FUL) by 30/08/2026.

The notice is published here - Enforcement Breach: VE24/49 - Online Register

Local Government Reorganisation un-paused

The Government has announced that the reorganisation of Councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire into 3 new unitary councils will go ahead. This is the same decision as was made in July. It was paused for review in September.

The pause delays the original timeline by 1 year. The timetable in our area is now:

- May 2027 – elections to Vale of White Horse District Council.
- May 2028 – elections to Ridgeway unitary council. This will be a shadow authority overseeing the setup of the council until vesting day. During this period Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council continue to run local services.
- 1st April 2029 - Vesting day – Ridgeway Council goes live; Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council cease to exist.

Thames Valley Mayoral Authority confirmed

VWHDC press release on the announcement of a Thames Valley Mayoral Authority - https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/uncategorised/vale-leader-welcomes-greater-clarity-on-thames-valley-devolution-plans/ .

In summary: the government has announced plans for a new Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority covering Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon. The proposed new authority would act as a new layer of local government led by an elected mayor and take responsibility for decisions on transport, infrastructure, housing, skills, economic growth and investment.

Councils across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Swindon will now work together to develop detailed proposals ahead of a stakeholder consultation planned for the New Year. Subject to approval by councils across the region and consideration of consultation responses, a formal proposal would then be submitted to government in spring 2027.

If approved by government through the statutory decision-making process, a Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority could be established in shadow form later in 2027, ahead of the first mayoral election in 2028. The authority would be overseen by an elected mayor working alongside a board including representatives from the region's upper-tier authorities, while existing councils would continue to deliver day-to-day local services such as housing, waste collection, planning, leisure services and social care.

Extra brown bin collection

Residents with a brown bin can put out extra garden waste for collection on their normal collection day between 2 November and 13 November 2026.

Leader agrees to call out Thames Water on inadequate consultation

I have challenged the Leader of the Council to call out Thames Water's shameless disregard of VWHDC's request for targeted consultations on 7 priority topics. Thames Water have just held what was described as a White Horse Reservoir Targeted Consultation (9 Sept to 7 Oct 2026) on construction access points. Despite the name, Thames Water only contacted landowners whose property is directly affected. This is a bare legal minimum requirement and does not form a targeted consultation.

Following my question to her at our October Council meeting, Cllr Bethia Thomas has agreed to write to Thames Water to express the Council's view that this in no way meets our request for targeted consultations. It's important that our concerns cannot be air-brushed away ahead of Thames Water's application for consent for the reservoir.

Signposting for Parish Councillors and Residents:

Cost of Living Help

Cost of living advice and support from Vale of White Horse District Council.

This page summarises help from the district council and other sources.
The Community Hub can also point people to a range of help:

- Tel: 01235 422600
- Email: communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

Help with energy bills

Better Housing Better Health is a free service for Oxfordshire residents to help you keep warm and save money on energy bills. Better Housing Better Health – free energy and heating advice or ring 0800 107 0044.

Rural Services Network's Latest Funding Digest

A digest of funding opportunities which may be useful to rural councils and community groups. This is updated every month. Rural Services Network – monthly rural funding digest.