



County council elections

On Thursday 1 May elections for Oxfordshire County Council will take place. You can find below some useful information about voting in these elections. You can also contact Vale of White Horse District Council (the local electoral registration office) for further information and help, particularly if you are unable to access the online resources below. They can be contacted at Electoral Services, Vale of White Horse District Council, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE, 01235 422600,

elections@southandvale.gov.uk.

- To be able to vote, you must be on the electoral register. If you are not already on the register, the last date you can apply to vote in these elections is midnight on Friday 11th April.
- You can register to vote online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.
- You can also register using a paper form which should be returned to the Electoral Registration Officer at Vale of White Horse District Council.
- You can help a friend or relative register to vote if you have their date of birth, address and National Insurance number.
- The last date to apply for a Postal Vote is Monday 14 April 2025 by 5pm: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>
- Applications to appoint a Proxy to vote on your behalf must be submitted by 5pm on Wednesday 23 April 2025: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote>
- Photographic ID will be required at polling stations by everyone who is registered to vote. You can find a list of acceptable ID at: <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-vote/photo-id-youll-need>
- If you wish to apply for free photographic ID (a Voter Authority Certificate) to use at a polling station, you will need to apply by 5pm on Wednesday 23 April 2025:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate>)

Skate park updates

Following a recent annual safety inspection of play equipment that categorised the skate park start ramp, half pipe and platform transition as high risk and consequently unsafe for use, these features have now been removed from the park. We are actively investigating a replacement park and have a dedicated group of councillors exploring funding avenues and design options, including making any new park more accessible to beginners and those with disabilities. We had ideally hoped to replace the existing equipment with a new park without any loss of facilities. However, the rapid state of deterioration of the existing park has made this impractical. Clearly the removal of the existing equipment leaves a gap in our facilities and over the coming months we'll be accelerating our plans for a new park.

Additionally, as part of our ongoing program of work to replace, refurbish and maintain our play equipment and youth facilities, we will shortly be installing a replacement teen shelter. In preparation for this work, the existing shelter, which had reached the end of its life, has also been removed. In parallel with the installation of the new shelter, we are planning a number of measures to deter anti-social behaviour and ensure that the skate park is a safe and welcoming place for both young people and parents. We are planning to install a security camera in the vicinity and are also looking at potential improvements to lighting of the shelter, recognising, of course, that any additional lighting will need to be sensitive to neighbours and minimise any lighting spill into surrounding residential areas.

Children's play area garden

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we have an ongoing project to revitalise the strip of garden adjacent to the toddlers' play area, near the pre-school. Work has now started with some preliminary clearing of the area, which you may

have noticed if your children use the play park. We expect to be planting out in the next few months and will be organising a working day to do this. If you would like to volunteer to help with the planting, please contact Cllr Kevin Middleton for further details.

Flooding & highway verges

Over the last few months the parish council has been pushing for greater engagement from Oxfordshire County Council's highways team over a wide range of issues that are directly affecting residents, including the repeated flooding of Bow Road, as well as the ongoing frustrations around the continuous flooding at Challow.

One of our high priority items has always been getting a resolution to prevent future flooding of Bow Road. Recent weeks have seen removal by the county council of fallen trees from Frogmore Brook where it borders the road. While this doesn't solve all the problems, and we are aware that there are still some remaining drainage issues in the area, the work does seem to have improved the flow of water and thus the overall capacity of the brook and surrounding fields to cope with future periods of high rainfall.

The clearing back of the verge has also presented us with an opportunity to try out alternative methods of highway verge management. We are sensitive to the fact that mowing approaches/frequencies/levels have always been a point of differing opinions around the village and that there is no 'one size fits all' approach appropriate for the whole village. Schemes such as "no mow May", although they capture headlines, can be challenging for us to implement due to the scale of mowing, unpredictable weather and limitations of our equipment to deal with the results afterwards.

A number of years ago we identified wildflower planting as a way to significantly improve biodiversity, while also producing visually pleasing results. At the time we felt that this would be of interest for some (but not all) of the verges within the village that we deal with on behalf of the county council, and one of the areas we identified as suitable was the Bow Road verge.

However, further investigation revealed that it wasn't possible to simply overseed, and that the recommendation (from charities such as Plantlife) was to strip back to bare earth before sowing.

Given we now find ourselves with the Bow Road verge having been cleared of virtually all growth, we have an opportunity to reseed the area. With this in mind, the parish council has approved reseeding of the verge with a wildflower mix, selected for improved biodiversity and visual appearance. Left to its own devices, the verge is likely to re-establish as a weed mixture dominated by a few of the most vigorous plant species, with little ecological or visual merit. Reseeding with wildflowers will help to enhance the ecological value of the verge and should also provide an attractive display with minimal intervention - a key consideration given the river bank is a water vole habitat.

In relation to ongoing issues affecting the A417 at Challow, we are still trying to secure wider support from neighbouring district and county councillors in order to push for a holistic solution, rather than the current situation where individual departments are only looking at small elements of the problem

Village bus stops

For some time now, the parish council has been working with the county council to improve bus infrastructure in the village. We've been mindful of the need to balance the need for better bus facilities with sensitivities around listed buildings and the village conservation area. We have now agreed the following improvements with the county council:

- A pole and flag will be installed at the High Street stop outside Cox's Hall (Faringdon direction) along with a short path and dropped kerb linking up to the pavement.
- A grasscrete hardstanding area with dropped kerb will be created on High Street opposite Cox's Hall (Wantage direction) with a pole and flag.
- The brick-built bus shelter on Church Green will be repainted and refurbished with a flag added to an outer pillar.
- The bus shelter at the corner of Cottage Road and Upper Crale will be refurbished and a pole and flag installed.
- A grasscrete hardstanding area with dropped kerb will be created at Upper Green (Faringdon direction) with a pole and flag.
- Kerbstones will be installed along the edge of Upper Green opposite the Faringdon-

bound bus stop to prevent erosion and damage from passing vehicles.

- The Upper Green stop in the Wantage direction will be relocated to the western end of the green, opposite Cottage Farm.

Garden waste collections

If you have a garden waste collection from the district council, please be aware that an annual permit sticker scheme is being introduced on 1 April 2025. Further details can be found online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/gardenwaste or by phoning Vale of White Horse District Council on 01235 422422.

Additional Information

Your parish council

- Parish, town and community councils in England and Wales have a number of basic responsibilities in making the lives of local communities more comfortable. Essentially these powers fall within three main categories: representing the whole electorate within the parish, delivering services to meet local needs and striving to improve quality of life in the parish.
- Stanford in the Vale Parish Council by convention does not operate along party political lines. All councillors are unpaid volunteers. Our parish clerk is employed for 20 hours per week.

- The parish council lobbies district and county councils over issues in the parish and scrutinises and comments on planning applications. The district council decides most planning applications.
- The parish council is responsible for the upkeep of a number of areas within the village:
 - Village greens
 - The play area next to the village hall
 - The QEII field
 - The skate park and multi-use games area
 - The Millennium Green
 - Mowing some areas of the village on behalf of the county council
 - Litter picking – we employ a litter picker for several hours per week

Other useful contacts

- Your Member of Parliament is Olly Glover (Lib Dem): olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk
- Your County Councillor is Juliette Ash (Con): juliette.ash@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- Your County Council is a coalition of Lib Dem-Green Party alliance as a minority administration. They are responsible for schools, roads and footpaths, transport and travel, recycling facilities, children's services and adult social care; see: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>
- Your District Councillor is Sue Caul (Lib Dem):

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

Kevin Middleton (Chair)	kevinfmiddleton@gmail.com	01367 718395
Peter Lewis (Vice Chair)	plewis.sitv@gmail.com	07941 500442
Bryan Burls	bryanburlsatoxford@gmail.com	07904 593627
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Parish Clerk (Claire Lewis)	clerk@stanfordinthevalepc.co.uk	07710 760894