

Vale of White Horse District Councillors' Report

Katherine Foxhall and Viral Patel
Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

September 2023

Ward News

Sewage Storm Overflow Data (Jan-Sept 2023)

In her role as Nature Recovery Champion, Katherine requested the full set of data relating to storm overflow discharges for Vale of White Horse from January 2023. The results are shocking but not entirely surprising.

Below is a table showing the data for the two sewage treatment works that serve this ward at Faringdon and Shrivenham. With several months of the year still to go, the total hours of discharge are already well in excess of the 2022 and 2021 figures, and for Faringdon already double 2020, even after a £3 million upgrade. This really does show that discharge reductions in 2021 and 2022 were the result of dry weather, not infrastructure investment.

Thames Water Event Duration Monitoring Data

Source: Thames Water via Environment Information Request.

STW	2023 (to Sept)		2022		2021		2020	
	Hours	Events	Hours	Events	Hours	Events	Hours	Events
Shrivenham	467.08	59	117.52	14	386.2	25	762.72	51
Faringdon	223.08	126	88.74	59	131.93	70	127.89	54

Thames Water have also confirmed that neither Faringdon nor Shrivenham are currently included in their designated "high priority sites" as set out in the government's Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan. Given the Shrivenham outflow's proximity to the Tuckmill Meadow SSSI, I will be asking for this outflow to be included as a high priority site, and will be raising the issue via a question to the council leader at our next full council meeting on 11 October. I will also be forwarding these figures to David Johnston MP.

Full details of all sewage discharges across the Vale so far this year, as well as local works at Lechlade and Sevenhampton are attached with this report.

Bin Mapping

The Vale has embarked on bin and litter mapping projects, several parishes in this ward have had requests for new bins to be added to collection or new bin installations stalled awaiting the completion of these projects.

Viral is meeting with officers in the Vale Waste team to ascertain a timeline for completion of these projects, but more concretely to find out when can parishes start to submit new requests for collections and installations.

Concrete Spills from Grundon, Little Coxwell at the A420 Fernham Road / Great Coxwell junctions

We raised this issue at the September FATAC meeting, and now expect both Viral and Katherine to be invited to join the liaison committee with Grundon to help with communication and resolution of issues that affect residents in the ward.

Closed Churchyard Maintenance (Coleshill, Great Coxwell, Shrivenham)

In response to concern from Coleshill regarding the condition of the church wall and its potential for collapse, a Vale officer has confirmed that they are intending to have a structural engineer inspect all Closed Churchyards that Vale maintains on behalf of the diocese and compile an up-to-date condition report. As the project is not yet running, but given residents' concerns, the Coleshill site will be inspected in the interim, and temporary action taken if needed.

NHS Bath and NE Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB

Wearing both her ward member and scrutiny hat, Katherine is liaising with senior council officers to arrange for the BANES team to attend a Vale scrutiny meeting so that we can look at their strategy and their plans for community services, as we have with the Berks, Oxon and Bucks ICB that covers most of the county. This meeting will be open to public attendance with the possibility to speak publicly in relation to this agenda item, and we will keep in touch to confirm a date.

Major Planning Application

A reserved matters application has been received from Beale Homes for 125 dwellings on land south of Steeds Farm (i.e. the site between Faringdon, Great Coxwell and the A420). Ref: [P23/V2162/RM](#)

Supporting Local Residents

We have received several requests for advice from local residents in relation to housing and neighbourhood issues, and have offered advice or put them in touch with the relevant council teams or referred them to our county councillor where issues are related to schools or highways.

We are working closely with the Housing and Environmental Health teams on case work to support social housing tenants with ongoing problems relating to waste collection and long-term damp and mould issues arising from poor construction / building maintenance.

Playing field lease (Little Coxwell)

Viral met with VOWHDC officers in relation to the lease of the village playing field, where VOWHDC is the landowner and Little Coxwell PC are the tenants. The land has been in use by the village for many years for sports and village celebrations, and was originally intended to be passed on to LC long term, however more recently that decision was changed to a short-term lease. The process of moving this forward has been stalled for some time, but has finally moved to a draft lease being presented to LC PC.

However, questions remain as to what happens at the end of the short lease and what costs could be passed onto LC PC now and in the future. Viral is continuing to follow up on this.

Council News

Scrutiny News – Car Parks, Leisure Centres and Fair Pay

In her role as Co-Chair of Joint Scrutiny, Katherine led discussion about the performance of two of the Council's major contracts with GLL and Saba, who respectively run leisure centres and car parks.

While there was much that was satisfactory in both reports, the meeting did raise issues of whether customer satisfaction information is being adequately collected. The meeting was also particularly mindful about the creeping shift to digital payments, and the exclusion of residents who find this difficult or impossible.

A direct outcome of the meeting is that together with Green Party Cllr Jo Robb (South Oxfordshire), Katherine will be bringing a proposal to the October's Full Council meeting, to ask Vale to bring contractors into line with the existing "Fair Living Wage" pay policy for direct employees. If passed this will mean a pay increase of up to £1500 pa for some of the lowest paid staff as council contracts are renegotiated.

'Check it before you chuck it' Campaign

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have launched a new campaign asking people to check before they chuck items in their recycling bins.

This autumn, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils will be placing stickers on all green household recycling bins to encourage people to 'Check it before you chuck it'.

The sticker features a QR code for people to scan to help them check, along with a reminder that all items in the green bin should be clean, dry and loose.

For the full news item about the campaign: [Residents urged to 'Check it before you chuck it' - Vale of White Horse District Council \(whitehorsedc.gov.uk\)](https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/news/2023/10/12/residents-urged-to-check-it-before-you-chuck-it/)

Council Reaffirms its Opposition to Reservoir Plans

Plans for an expanded controversial reservoir near Abingdon have again been criticised by local communities, with Vale of White Horse District Council urging water providers to consider alternative solutions.

The council has reaffirmed its objections to the reservoir in a formal letter to Thames Water following submission of their revised Draft Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) to government. The draft WRMP not only progresses plans for the reservoir, known as the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO), but proposed to increase the capacity by 50% from 100Mm³ to 150Mm³. Meanwhile, the proposed Severn to Thames Water transfer has been downgraded as an option.

The council argues that the plans fail to fully consider the long term impacts to the local community and the environment, both during a decade of construction and the irreparable damage to the countryside.

A reservoir would also come at the expense of significant carbon emissions which the council argues would impact the district's ability to become carbon neutral by 2045. Full press release: [Plans for reservoir continue despite local objections - Vale of White Horse District Council \(whitehorsedc.gov.uk\)](https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/news/2023/10/12/plans-for-reservoir-continue-despite-local-objections/)

Nature Champion Role

Katherine's role as Nature Recovery Champion was featured in a recent press release: [Champions work to make the Vale a greener, healthier place - Vale of White Horse District Council \(whitehorsedc.gov.uk\)](https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/news/2023/10/12/champions-work-to-make-the-vale-a-greener-healthier-place/)