

OCC Annual Report 2023-24, Faringdon Division

Cllr Bethia Thomas

My role as a County Councillor focuses mainly on issues in the division, and those particularly related to traffic and highways. It is a very different role to the one I hold in Vale, and I am very proud to serve the community in this way.

That said, I do retain several different functions within the council, including membership of the Corporate Parenting Committee, and the Fostering Panel, both of which I find very rewarding and truly meaningful. I am also proud to be the Military Champion of the area representing Shrivenham Defence Academy and reporting regularly to the Oxfordshire Civilian Military Partnership and assisting with relevant matters on site.

This year I have also been made one of the council's Water Champions, to monitor the significant issues the county faces in this area. I will largely focus on Thames Water and the mismanagement of water resources, leaks and infrastructure including the proposed SESRO Reservoir that could be located in our district if this option were to go ahead. My colleague, Cllr Andy Graham, will concentrate on water pollution including the illegal discharge of sewage into our rivers and waterways.

The council continues to remain buoyant, recently presenting a balanced budget, despite the immense strains it has to face with poor resourcing from central government. The administration continues with an alliance between Liberal Democrat and Green Party, and a recent appointment of a dedicated SEND Cabinet Member has started to see a turn around in this service. Just last month the council's children's services in Oxfordshire were judged as "good" by OFSTED.

Local Issues

As already stated, much of my time is taken up with issues concerning traffic and highways, but I look into other matters as well. I am pleased that the two outstanding property issues at FAZE and the Faringdon Infant School Site are now resolved, with the latter bringing a benefit to the community with the addition of the planned SEND School.

Sadly some issues I have been working on are not yet resolved, like the S106 payments we are due to support adult social care; that said, I had the opportunity to lead on this in a recent meeting and I am awaiting further feedback from officers, as I am determined to get this resolved.

FATAC is the main forum for discussion on traffic and highways and with the inclusion of the Special Annual Meeting to discuss Safety on the A420, we are making good progress and contributing towards the county's 'Vision Zero' Programme which hope to reduce deaths and serious injury due to road traffic collisions across the county. Main achievements include:

- Reducing the speed limit on the A420, north of Faringdon to south of Great Coxwell to 50mph which is now being investigated, alongside the possibility of doing the same for the A417 to Lechlade.
- Securing reduced speed limits for many villages in the division, many of which have now switched to 20mph, and other areas that reducing from 60mph to 40mph (Eaton Hastings, A417) and 40mph to 30mph 40mph (Buscot, A417).
- Improvements in the signage at various points along the A420 including the installation of dropped kerb and lighting in Littleworth.

- The A420 Pedestrian and Cyclist Island & Footway Links at Fernham Road which is on the list for delivery in the 2024/25 financial year.
- The review and installation of improved signage on the B4019 to Coleshill and the A4095 to Radcot, the latter especially designed to reduce HGV damage to the Radcot Bridge.

The other main way I feel I contribute most to our community is through the Councillor's Priority Fund, which I have spent throughout the division on various projects. Most significant to Faringdon are the payments to The Place, The Oxfordshire Play Association, YoCO Faringdon, and FollyFest, funding a marquee for the event, as well as funding the purchase of a bench on behalf of FTC for installation at the retail park for less mobile users of the Faringdon Community Bus. Other Parishes and the wider community have benefited from payments to MayMessy, The Vale Tridents and the purchase of equipment including a request for a marquee from Little Coxwell and SIDs in various villages. There is still a small portion of the fund remaining, so please encourage any group who may benefit from this to apply.

Vale Annual Report 2023-24, Faringdon Ward

Cllrs Lucy Edwards & Bethia Thomas

The municipal year began with the local elections across the Vale, in which we were voted in to represent the residents of Faringdon with a significant majority. The political make up of the council as a whole shifted a little, so that we became the only council in mainland England with no representatives of either of the main parties, and in our case, a Green opposition – an unusual position given that politically we often ally with each other in other council settings.

At the beginning of the year the council announced its new cabinet, under the leadership of Cllr Thomas, and later Cllr Edwards came to join executive taking on her own portfolio. The cabinet portfolios were arranged to reflect the administration's priorities with climate and the environment, affordable housing, and healthy communities at the heart of everything we do, while maintaining a stable financial position and providing value for money services to our residents.

The council has been busy over the past year, working on projects to reflect the council's priorities, most notably of course, the Joint Local Plan, in partnership with SODC, which, should it be approved, will set an innovative plan for development in the district for years to come, with strict standards for building, carbon zero climate targets and no further allocations for housing in the district. It is groundbreaking in its approach, has been welcomed by residents in our recent consultation, and we are truly proud to be pushing this plan forward.

This year we have also become a housing provider for the first time in decades, acquiring housing stock through various schemes allowing us to help in the resettlement of Afghan refugees, many of whom were working to support the British Armed Forces in Afghanistan as translators and aides. We have been supporting them directly to enable them to build a new home here, alongside other refugees from Ukraine, Syria and Hong Kong.

Looking ahead we are currently working on setting the priorities for the council's work over the next four years with our new corporate plan currently out for consultation, asking residents "What is in the heart of your Vale?". We hope that you will join in and respond to the consultation before it closes in May.

Local Issues

We continue to serve the local community, and while we are not able to disclose much of our case work for reasons of privacy, we are called on regularly to support residents on housing matters, to resolve council tax issues, and other sensitive topics.

Earlier in the year we were very happy to see Elmside reopen having had extensive renovations, providing much needed temporary accommodation for our most vulnerable residents. As the cost of living crisis continues we were glad that FTC successfully bid for a grant to support the food bank, and do as much as we can to support other vulnerable residents in the town.

We continue to support the town council in its work to deliver arts projects including the artistic bench trail and work with other groups across the town to ensure we see improved facilities for sport and leisure. Faringdon has seen the addition of fully accessible play equipment in Marlborough Gardens, which has also been a site for the 'Let it Bee' scheme which encourages wildflower growth to improve local biodiversity. We look forward to the construction of the ATP at FCC and are happy with continued improvements at the leisure centre.



REPORT

Faringdon Neighbourhood Team annual report to Faringdon Town Council

Faringdon Neighbourhood Team
South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse LPA

30/04/2024

Members of the team:

Sergeant 6754 Sarah TURPIN

Police Constable 6694 Alex NORRIS

Police Constable 6732 Bill HUTCHINGS

Police Community Support Officer C7183 James PELLING

Police Community Support Officer C9978 Maralyn PACK

Police Community Support Officer C9600 Howard PACK

In the last year, Police Community Support Officer 9974 Sam MORTON has left the neighbourhood team, joining a different department within Thames Valley Police.

Policing priorities for Faringdon Neighbourhood Team:

Anti-social behaviour: Although there has been a significant reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) within the Town, this still remains to be a high priority for the team. In taking steps towards reducing the crime committed in the area that is fuelled by anti-social behaviour the team have; prosecuted three suspects, cautioned one suspect, issued six community resolutions and successfully applied for a Community Behaviour Order. The team have also been working alongside statutory and third-sector organisations in order to introduce a youth provision to the town that will focus on education and diversion in hope to see a long-term reduction in ASB. This is in the latter stages and the Town is soon to see more activities available to its younger community. Force analysts have been working with the team to identify hot-spot areas within the town where Anti-Social Behaviour is prevalent. The team ensure that these locations are visited repeatedly to engage with those that frequent them and take robust action when needed.

Violence Against Women and Girls: The team have been completing enhanced checks at our licensed premises including pubs and retail premises alongside extra high visibility patrols throughout our market town and more rural locations. We have engaged with takeaways, taxi operatives, staff and the public

at our transport hubs and have worked with our partners in the council. The team have also been engaging with the local hotels reminding them of their safeguarding responsibilities and licensing conditions. In all the team have been working intensely to make the town a safer place for everyone to enjoy.

Drug Usage: The Neighbourhood have dedicated time to analyse drug related crime. This has allowed the team to complete targeted patrols in areas identified through this work. This has resulted in a number of positive stop searches that have led to the seizure of drugs and prosecution of offenders. The team have also spent time to understand how drugs motivate those that commit crime. This has seen the team divert more offenders, than seen previously, providing them with help; education; guidance and support around the use of illegal substances. This action has seen a reduction in repeat offenders frequenting the town and surrounding areas.

The use of technology within Neighbourhood Policing:

Thames Valley Police have designed a 'hot spot' policing application, which is downloaded onto officers work mobile phones. Using data from our crime recording systems, geographical hotspots are identified which are shown on the application.

In Faringdon, this has led to a reduction of anti-social behaviour in those areas and positive stop searches for drugs.

Crime statistics:

The crime statistics for the area of Faringdon can be found on the Police.uk website. The website url is: <https://www.police.uk/your-area/thames-valley-police/faringdon>

The crime statistics are not exclusive for Faringdon solely; the statistics cover the geographical boundary that the Faringdon Neighbourhood Team cover. This is a vast area and the map on the next page (**Image 1**) shows this.

The Police.uk website will give details of the crimes reported and a yearly overview of the crimes which can be broken down to a monthly basis. To identify the crimes that relate solely to Faringdon, a crime map, which indicates the offence location can be used. **Image 2** is a screenshot of the Police.uk website relating to Faringdon. **Image 3** is a screenshot of the Police.uk website highlighting the crime map.

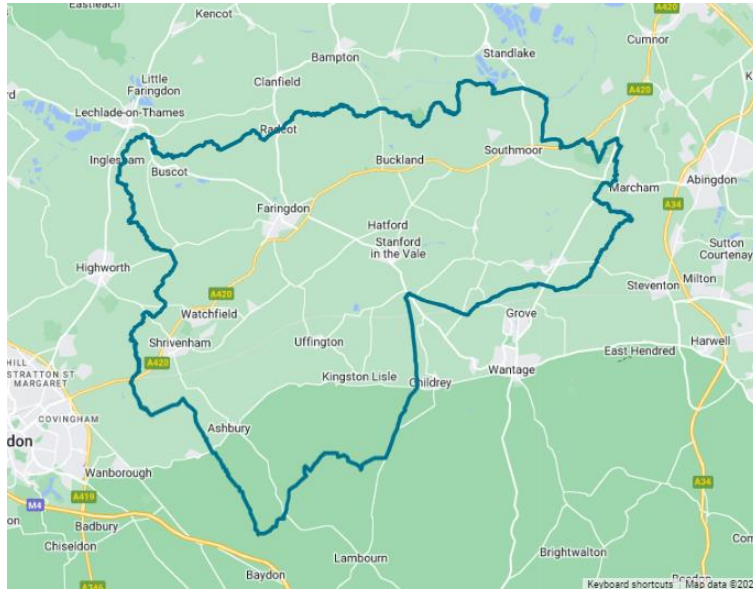


Image 1

Faringdon

Overview
Crime map
Stop and search
Statistics

Top reported crimes

Most commonly reported crimes during Feb 2024

Violence and sexual offences	58
Criminal damage and arson	11
Vehicle crime	11
Anti-social behaviour	9

[Get crime prevention advice](#)

Crime levels overview

Crime for last year

Crime per Month

[View as a list](#)

Image 2

Top reported crimes in this area
Crime map
Our priorities

Click on a hotspot to see more details. Alternatively, [view as A-Z list](#).

Crime type and time period title

Image 3

2023-2024 Brief Report from Faringdon Fire Station – By Watch Manager Becky Rimmer

Incident to date

Since our last report April 2023, Faringdon have attended 197 Incidents up by 2 from last year consisting of:

Alarms actuating at Residential and Domestic Properties.

Road Traffic collision

Special service calls i.e. lock in-outs, Animal Rescues,

Primary Fires i.e. House Fires

Secondary Fires i.e.: Bin Fires, Fire in the open.

Chimney Fires

Over the Boarder incidents, assisting crews from Wiltshire.

Several major Incidents that we have helped assist with other emergency services, Police and Ambulance.

In addition to the above we continue to carry out our weekly training sessions as well as whole day annual refreshers on core skills i.e. Breathing Apparatus, Road Traffic Collisions, Working at Height, Water Rescues and other Life critical training.

Station Support

We have a Station Support Officer Watch Manager David Long, he has been working at the fire station since January 2023, supporting our recruitment campaigns, training, fire protection and community safety - Safe and well visits as well as being operational.

Recruiting

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service are recruiting for 'On Call' personnel over the age of 18ys. This year we have lost two of our firefighters due to moving out of Faringdon, we have gained one by them moving into Faringdon. We are in a position to recruit new members for day and weekend cover. So, anyone that may be interested or know of anyone that would be interested in becoming an On Call firefighter then please email: rebecca.rimmer@oxfordshire.gov.uk or you can visit the station and have a chat on Wednesday's evenings from 18:00-21:00. You can also get further information about the role and the recruitment process on www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oncallfirefighter

Community Responding

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and South-Central Ambulance Service are still in partnership, training all fire fighters as IEC (Immediate Emergency Care) so we can support and attend cardiac arrest patients. For those that may not be aware of, we have a Defibrillator located on the front external wall of the fire station to be used in an emergency by members of the public. It is regularly checked and online with the national circuit, which means in the event of any cardiac arrest the emergency operator will be able to advise you the exact location and confirm the security code to gain access.

Safe & Wellbeing Visits

We continue safe & wellbeing visits, delivering fire safety talks, check and fit smoke alarms. If anyone would like information on fire safety or request a visit from us, then please contact 08000 325999 or visit our website on www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Biker Down – Road Safety

We are still offering FREE Biker Down workshop to learn the practical skills of what to do if you are first on scene at a crash involving a motorcyclist.

Motorcycle 'Biker Down' Courses are available throughout the year, for more details please visit the website www.365alive.co.uk

Social Media

Follow us on the following platforms



Faringdon Fire Station
OxonFireRescue

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (Official)

OxonFireRescue

Council Reports – NALC and OALC

Councillor Rufus Lunn – 30/04/2024

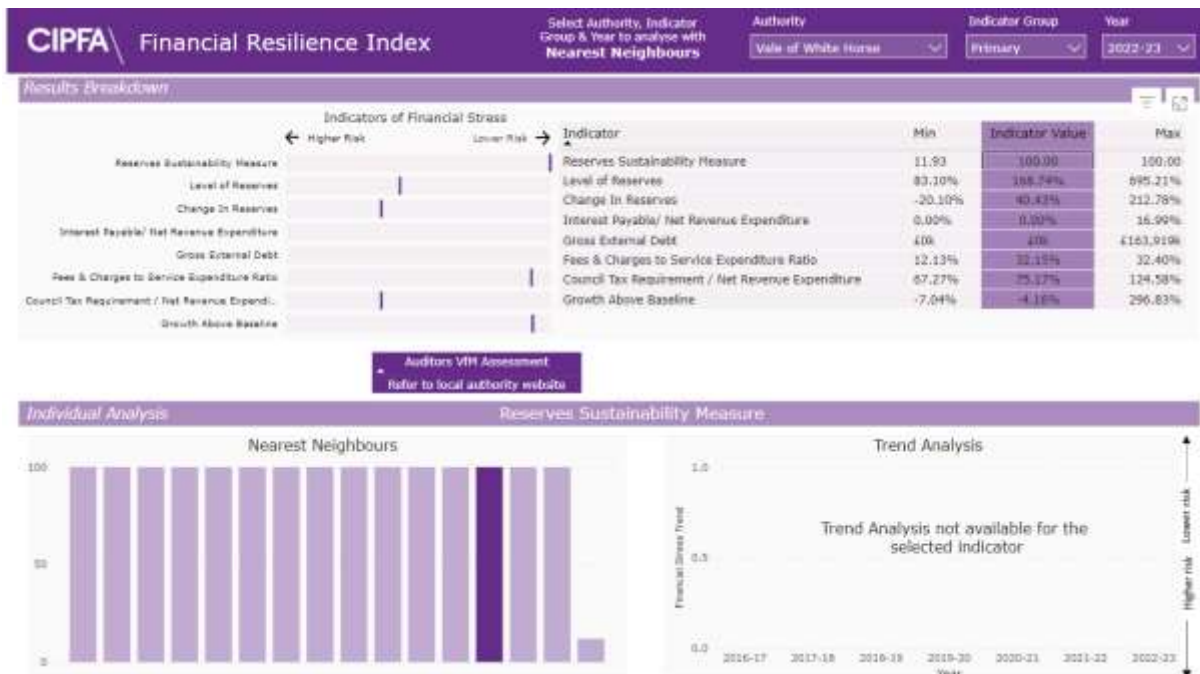
National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) are a national membership body that represent over 10,000 local councils across the UK. Within NALC, Faringdon are recognised as a Larger Council and I was elected to the Larger Council committee in February 2024. This role improves our standing as an influential town and council and helps us have a say in the operations of NALC to best empower local people across the country.

On the 30th April I attended the Larger Council's Committee at the Bloomsbury building in London. This was an annual event to review the current priorities of the Larger Council's Committee and explore what topics will bring the most value to the NALC network. These can be summarised as:

- Sharing Good Practice
- Regeneration of Market Towns
- Empowerment of the local government Ombudsman
- Devolution
- Community safety
- Financial Resilience
- Youth Engagement
- Technology and Data

We also received a presentation from the Chartered Institute for Public Finance Accountability (CIPFA) on maintaining financial resilience in the face of a challenging financial climate, with key indicators of when rese. The CIPFA Financial Resilience Index ([Resilience index \(cipfa.org\)](https://www.cipfa.org/resilience-index)) is a free tool for comparative insights on the strength of local authority reserves, which includes Faringdon under the Vale of the White Horse District Council.



We also held a freeform discussion about the role of AI in society and with respect to Local Government. We feel councils are at the very beginning of their engagement with AI as an efficiency multiplier, but proactive steps can be taken in preparing data for new tools and more accessible applications that can be utilised as part of council operations. Local Council's key contribution to this is in controlling process and policy for the use of AI and technology as part of our operations and doing it in a way that safeguards our communities while providing new capabilities we are not able to deliver otherwise.

We also held a discussion on the climate change emergency and what actions councils were taking to proactively act on these announcements, especially in respect to coastal communities.

We also had an overview of Martyn's Law ([Martyn's Law to ensure stronger protections against terrorism in public places - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/martyns-law-to-ensure-stronger-protections-against-terrorism-in-public-places)) where there is likely to be a requirement from this work for local councils to ensure their areas are anti-terrorism compliant with appropriate risk management and strategies put into place. NALC are calling on as many parish councils as possible to be a part of this discussion but recognise this is likely to fall under a new parliamentary term and further changes may be made.

NALC continue to provide key support services to Greater Faringdon town council, with training sessions, recruitment notices and a conduit for our council to have our say on government policy at a national level. It is also providing a network to build connections with other councils and enhance our best practice behaviours.

Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils

The Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) is a member body providing a network for local councils to share their views, access support services and raise challenges at a county level. As a member, we are entitled to engage with regular meetings and an AGM. In May 2023, I was selected at a local level to act as the key liaison to OALC and communicate key messages back into the local council with regular reports.

At the OALC forum on the 13th February the ongoing works by Gigaclear and Virgin Media were discussed, which are causing disruption to road and pavement infrastructure across the county. These appear to be mostly completed within Faringdon, but concerns have been raised with County Council that different parishes are receiving variable communication on County Council contracted works. Ideally, we would like to work with County officers to improve notification ahead of time of these and other works to enable us to communicate more effectively with the local community and avoid disruption.

Alongside this an escalation process was discussed for anti-social behaviour, as well as banking best practice behaviour for local councils.

OALC continue to provide key support services to Greater Faringdon town council, with training sessions, recruitment notices and an enabler for the Town Council to build support partnerships across the county.



Report to Faringdon Town Council - May 2024

Faringdon Art Society remains a focal point of creative arts and crafts in the town and surrounding region, and in the last two to three years has consciously sought greater connection with the general community.

We acknowledge the integral role of Faringdon Town Council in the support of the arts in our region and acceptance of the research showing that engagement with the arts, on any level, is beneficial by challenging inequalities through to improving good health.



The Annual Exhibition has been a feature of Faringdon activities since 1964, and we are proud to provide this opportunity for the community to share our artists' achievements. There is a history that sees many locals and their visitors eagerly return each year - to view as well as purchase art.

The Corn Exchange is strongly linked to the event, and we are very fortunate to have that splendid venue available for us all to enjoy through Faringdon Town Council support.

In collaboration with Faringdon Town Council and Oxfordshire Artweeks, Faringdon Art Society is staging an exhibition of 10 local artists during the renowned Artweeks event. It was considered to be an important presence to establish within the township of Faringdon.

Locals are encouraged to view the works and meet the artists during the May opening, and there is a strong tradition of people travelling around Oxfordshire to view and purchase art and craft works - and meet those who create them. Faringdon will no doubt benefit with an additional art show for locals to enjoy and the visitation of people who would otherwise not include Faringdon in their exploring. We hope to see this Artweeks presence in Faringdon continuing for years to come.

Faringdon Town Council has generously provided Old Town Hall free of charge for 2024. Without that sponsorship in its initial year, this Artweeks exhibition in such an ideal venue would probably not have been a manageable expense.



Oxfordshire Artweeks participation has been introduced for our Society's 60th year, along with another new initiative - a community art competition. This is a call to residents who do not normally submit work to our exhibitions to enter this open competition. The Society is working with the Editor of *The Advertiser* to reach Faringdon locals. One of the two categories artwork winners will be featured on the cover of this magazine for the month of October. Again, we envisage a fun community art competition becoming an annual event!



Anne Mills, Secretary

VALE COMMUNITY IMPACT (VCI)

Report for the Faringdon Town Meeting on 1st May; for the year 2023/24

Vale Community Impact (VCI) is a relatively small, independent local charity that provides a suite of services to the Faringdon community. We offer free and impartial advice on a broad range of topics such as debt & money management, benefits, and housing alongside a community transport service, a befriending scheme, isolation support and weekly shopping trips. Our aim is to deliver assistance in a tailored manner to suit the particular needs of the residents, a client may receive help from just one or two of our services or even all of them in a blended solution. Our main office base is in the market square in Wantage; however, we offer out-reach advice services at Day Centres, community groups, information cafés, village/church halls, information fairs and GP surgeries. In addition to the transport and befriending services obviously involving support to, from and within the clients' own homes, we also have specialist volunteer advisors who will undertake benefits works or deliver key advice support at a client's residence where it has been assessed in advance from a safeguarding perspective.

Residents are able to obtain the advice support that they require Monday through Friday with face-to-face appointments and drop-in available throughout each day. The advance of technology and the growing confidence in it for many clients means that telephone, email, on-line chat and video-calls are also available as it is a must to ensure we are fully accessible. Our community transport typically involves scheduled drives to hospital, medical and day centre/community group destinations on weekdays. Our Good Neighbour Scheme matches the volunteer to the client and that includes availability, so evening and weekend visits or shopping aid do also take place where the right fit dictates that makes good sense.

VCI would like to thank the Town Council for its support and encouragement throughout the year. Our charity strives to continue to put clients' needs at the heart of our organisation's focus and it is a fine balance between resources, finances and need. The continuing cost-of-living crisis certainly drives an ongoing rise in the advice demand, but all of our services have seen an increase in terms of the numbers of residents seeking assistance. VCI is looking forward to 2024/25 and hopes the residents of Faringdon will continue to work with us, helping us to foster stronger links for the benefit of the whole community.

In terms of dedicated resource, our Constitution enables the Town Council to nominate a Trustee to our Management Committee. VCI has appreciated the input from Councillor Kimberley Morgan over the last 12 months, as we recognise the value to the Committee a representative from Faringdon brings. VCI would welcome conversations from residents who would like to know more about becoming a Trustee of our charity.

Our accounts for year ending March 31st 2024 will shortly undergo their independent examination by Chapman Worth, upon completion they will be uploaded to our website, www.vci.org.uk.

The understanding of the clients' needs is of paramount importance and the nature of change is often dynamic and swift. VCI strives to keep its services' focus as customer centric as possible and this requires flexibility and adaptability. The clients' needs present with ever increasing complexity and multiple layers. It is often necessary to not only make a difference to a client's situation but offer the assistance to help the client cope with the burden and personal impact of the issue. Budgeting worries, life-changing events, decreasing confidence and a lack of certainty bring with them a significant toll on mental health and the destructive nature can be overwhelming. Increasingly we are asked to reflect not only on the type of output and the quantity but on the outcomes achieved, the quality provided and the level of true difference made. Volunteers typically don't look for recognition or reward, they wish to make a difference and are driven by a desire to help; but they are the heartbeat of a charity like ours and we are extremely grateful for the time and expertise they generously share with both us and the clients.

VCI has in the region of 120 volunteers, numerous volunteers are involved in more than one of our services. These volunteers, who are at the centre of our resident-focussed delivery, are supported by a small part-time team of staff working a little over 130hrs a week collectively.

Over the last 12 months, VCI has provided **1,885** instances of “help assistance” to residents of Faringdon Town. Comparatively, that’s a 49% increase on the previous year which saw 1,263 instances of help received. There have been further occasions when one of our volunteer drivers has brought a client in from one of the surrounding areas ie Stanford in the Vale, Uffington, Watchfield and so on for access to local Faringdon retailers, dentists, the White Horse Medical Practice, the Pump House project and food bank sessions etc.

In 2023/24 VCI provided **1,315** advice consultations to Faringdon residents. Comparing this to the year before, which was in the region of 850, there is absolutely no doubt that the rise in demand level continues at an acute trajectory.

Faringdon residents most frequently sought advice on the following issues and concerns - with Debt, Budgeting and Money Management equating to just under a third of the total advice consultations for Faringdon residents:-

Budgeting	Grants / Loans	Benefits Check
Debt / Money Management	Housing	Consumer / Utilities
Blue Badge	Council Tax Support	Attendance Allowance

In excess of 75% of clients surveyed rated 4 or 5 out of 5 in terms of their level of worry or anxiety being experienced BEFORE contacting VCI; with 93% of clients rating 5 out of 5 in terms of the level of relief felt after engaging with VCI.

Over 70% said the difference made to their daily life was a 5 out of 5.

Quotation from an advice client:

“My life fell apart after I had a stroke. I was at rock bottom and you have picked me up and put me back on my feet. You’ve helped me access benefits and housing, and provided support for me at a time when I was desperate. You have given me my life back and knowing I can call on you for advice makes me feel much more positive.”

VCI has supported in the region of **50** Faringdon individuals, couples or family households to secure the funding associated with the central and local government Household Support Fund and Westmill Solar Co-operative Community schemes.

VCI has continued to collaborate well with other local community groups or activities to collectively deliver an overall solution of best-fit to a resident. VCI has continued its close working relationship with the White Horse Medical practice, with both parties passionate about the the overall wellbeing of residents. Fairly regular involvement of our Advice team at the Corn Exchange’s SOFEA Community Larder continues to be worthwhile with repeat sessions at The Pump House Project’s Winter Warm initiative, The Place and 2-3 weekly clinics at the surgery also being well received.

There were **286** transport bookings for Faringdon involving 363 residents of which 58% were for trips to one of the hospitals in Oxford or Swindon, 13% were for other medical related appointments and the remainder for Day Centres, Community activities or to bring a resident to a VCI event or appointment.

The Good Neighbour Scheme has seen a near 20% rise in its befriending provision for Faringdon having undertaken **284** befriending interactions between clients, the Good Neighbour volunteers and the VCI Liaison staff team during the last 12 months.

It is surprisingly possible for a volunteer to make a difference with even the smallest amount of “donated time”; in both Transport and Befriending services the level of flexibility is considerable. Please don’t hesitate to ask for more information or contact us to chat about volunteering opportunities. VCI is proud of its volunteer retention levels but with the rise in demand, new volunteers are sorely needed across each of the services, administration, projects, training and quality.

Our aim for 2024/25 is to ensure our valued and much needed provision continues to be available to all in need. Our charity’s focus remains to balance the high-quality and depth of the services provided whilst seeking long-term funding security and reach those in need who so far haven’t been in contact.

FARINGDON WRITERS GROUP REPORT FOR 2023-24

Faringdon Writers goes from strength to strength with an increasing number of members who appreciate all things writing. Volume 9 of the anthology Voices from Faringdon was published showcasing work from members. During the year we held our first Short Story Competition on the theme of 'Folly'. Open to the wider community for ages from 5 upwards, the intention was to encourage an interest in writing for all ages. This culminated in an awards ceremony in The Corn Exchange in November with certificates being presented by Faringdon's Librarian Sheena Gutteridge. This coincided with our 2nd Book Fair for local authors and poets again designed to aid the local community who might not have access to the more prestigious literary festivals. It is hoped that both these events will become annual occasions on the colourful Faringdon calendar. Plans are already in hand for both in 2024.

Val Hughes
Faringdon Writers

Parish Transport Representative Report 2024

Bus Services

Two new bus services introduced late 2023; 68 serving the villages on the old 67 routes and X35 Didcot - GW Park - Harwell Campus - Wantage – Faringdon. Both have been well received

Bus stop improvements

£102k annual budget for bus stop maintenance

Stop/shelter improvement and repair

Programme to “name” all bus stops by October 2026

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

- Sets out key long-term ambitions for improving our local bus network and how these will be achieved
- 159 new zero emission buses in Oxford
- improved travel information
- Park & Ride discounted fares
- eight new rural bus routes
- improved bus stop infrastructure

Grove for Wantage Station

- Consultant to be appointed shortly and report due back in the late- summer. Discussions are underway with landowners, the District Council and Network Rail/GWR
- Main challenges are the lack of a committed rail service and need for enabling rail infrastructure to support a new station
- Opportunities – enabling (housing) development and consideration of station as part of the new Bristol-Oxford and extended East-West rail services

Proposed Transport Hub Strategy

Four main types:

- Major hub (e.g. train/bus stations) – cycle parking, good walking links, served by other transport, possible retail presence.
- Linking hub – perhaps on an ‘A’ road with a frequent bus service (3-4 per hour).
- Suburban hub – town or village centre, or maybe a district centre in a suburban area.
- Mini hub – good walking/cycling links, maybe a Community Transport/Demand Responsive Transport component, secure/covered cycle parking.

Retail Park suggested as linking hub, decision in July 2024

Faringdon Community Bus (FCB) Report

FCB has been able to run a full service, unfortunately eight days were lost last year owing to a malfunctioning door. Nevertheless, passenger numbers are rising, 7,250 cf. 6,000 in the previous year, with an average daily passenger count of 30 cf. 23 in 21/22.

13 excursions were undertaken last year. Half day trips to Witney and Cirencester are proving very popular (particularly for access to shops banks) and are sometimes oversubscribed. Full day excursions on Saturdays are also increasing. A timetable and a booking sheet are available in the Information Office.

FCB now has a full complement of eight volunteer drivers.

This year the timetable was changed to include a visit to the new primary school with the hope that more children from the new estates on Coxwell Road would use the bus, but there have been few takers. Some children are using the bus to go to the Elms.

Apart from the door and an AdBlue problem, the bus has been running well, and benefits from excellent service from NMV; thanks also to Chris Gurney for providing free parking at RAC

Last year showed an increase in fare receipts from £12,254 to £13,634 and, although there was a decrease in admin and other costs, an increase in repair costs of £8,000 led to an overall loss of £3,574 cf to a profit of £2,663 last year.

Currently, there are no electrically-powered buses available with same seating capacity (16 passengers) as the diesel-powered bus. Manufacturers do not seem to have entered this market yet.

Mike Wise

Faringdon PAD Committee – Report to Faringdon Town Council & Public Meeting on events and activities of the committee – April 2023 – April 2024 –

- 1. The committee currently is made up of six members** – Chair; Malcolm Gee – Treasurer; Sandra Wiltshire – (Secretary; Vacant) – Alex Bond – Keeley Bond – 2x elected councillors appointed by FTC in support of the activities of the committee – Mr David Norris & Mr James Famakin.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking both David and James for their continued support of our activities over this past twelve months.

- 2. The primary aims and objectives of the committee in the year since April 2023** – have been concerned with the regular monitoring, maintenance and replacement of expired or used items, to support the PAD's (Publicly Accessible Defibrillators) as being 'rescue-ready', at times when they may be called on to be used in the event of a casualty suffering a cardiac crisis.

The committee holds responsibility for four units which are installed at the following locations:

The Southampton Street Car Park – Southampton Street.

Faringdon Community College (x2) – Fernham Road. Where there has been the installation of a second defibrillator and where, in this last year, defibrillators have been made available to all schools in the UK, through an initiative and funding made available from Department for Education.

Faringdon Fire Station – Station Road - This unit is monitored with the support of 1st Faringdon Scout Group and with the cooperation of station managers, is an opportunity for members of the group, also supported by their Leader, Shaun Shackelford to be able to take on a task that can lead to the achievement of their 'Community Engagement' Award and badge. For which we are thankful to Shaun and the group for their support of our committee and the PAD unit, to the benefit of the local community. We value the support also of Oxon Fire & Rescue Service.

- 3. The secondary activity of the committee and its members** – has consisted of supporting the installation of further units and to have these available in locations where they can be of most benefit to residents of the Faringdon community.

The committee has explored the possibility of units being placed at two additional locations in the last year. The FAAZE property on Highworth Road. Where the building under the control of OCC/Faringdon Town Council was considered as being a viable option to be brought back into community use. This has been decided as now not viable and while decisions are in place to transfer this site over to a future development.

The committee, in consultation and discussion involving Faringdon Allotment Society and Faringdon Town Council, have also considered and explored options for a PAD to be placed at the Canada Lane area and adjacent to Lechlade Road. Following investigation of the potential for electrical connection into a suitable site for a cabinet, both the allotment site itself, nor the BT telephone box offered themselves as viable options.

The committee, with the cooperation of the managers from Faringdon Fire Station, have been engaged in the replacement of the defibrillator cabinet, that after several years in place has suffered corrosion. A new cabinet has been provided and at no cost with the support of the original suppliers, when it was purchased with funds originally available from Faringdon 41 Club

and Faringdon & District Rotary. The support previously provided by these organisations will be recognised with their badge and logo being replaced onto the new cabinet in due course.

Our committee has either been involved, or been made aware of, recently located defibrillators at four further locations in the Faringdon community:

Screwfix Store – Old Sawmills Road – PAD registered and available during shop opening times.

Faringdon Community College – New Primary School building.

Faringdon Football Club – Tuckers Park – PAD registered and located on outside wall accessible 24/7.

Faringdon United Church – The Church on the Roundabout – Available to users of the church hall and church facilities at times when the church is open to the community.

4. The location of existing established PAD defibrillators are shown and displayed on the published postcard that has been available from the committee previously and been placed at various information outlets around the Faringdon Community.

The post card is now due to be updated and new information will be added for this useful information source to be available in due course and will be notified when available.

A further useful source of accessible information, or for use in the event of an emergency, can be found on the website: www.defibfinder.uk and will show on downloading to a device, the nearest location of a defibrillator to your area anywhere in the UK.

A local resource for information on the location of defibrillators, be that PAD's or 'Part-time' units available in an emergency, is also shown on www.faringdon.org with further locations of organisations in the community, who have a defibrillator on site and for use when these facilities are accessible to the public. These include;

Folly Sports Park – Stanford Road – PAD accessible 24/7.

Faringdon Library – Gloucester Street – PAD accessible 24/7.

Walker Associates Dental Practice – Gloucester Street – Part-time PAD accessible when open.

Tesco Store – Park Road – Part-time PAD – Accessible at times when store is open.

White Horse Medical Practice – Volunteer Way – PAD Accessible 24/7.

It must be noted, that all defibrillators accessible as PAD's require registering on the national website and data-base www.thecircuit.uk to then be accessible to the ambulance service on a 999 emergency call, where the location can then be identified by the ambulance dispatcher and to guide the rescuer to the nearest unit on being given the code number to the locked cabinet.

5. The PAD committee had the opportunity of supporting the Faringdon United Church in February, with a well-attended coffee morning, where a CPR and defibrillator awareness presentation was delivered, along with a demonstration and 'have-a-go' session involving 44 participants.

This event, acknowledged as a great success, also provided a fundraising opportunity from donations towards the cost of the defibrillator, the cabinet and its installation, that is now

available for the benefit of those groups and the congregation using the church facilities when the building is open. This unit is not registered as a PAD defibrillator.

6. The committee has recently identified a new initiative that has been put in place between Travelodge and British Heart Foundation, that helps to raise awareness through the national BHF ReVive campaign, the means for any guest of a Travelodge hotel, to have access to CPR training through an app that can be accessed at any of its hotel facilities and to provide guidance on responding to a cardiac or other medical crisis in an emergency.

Contact has been made with the BHF and Travelodge Partnership team to identify how the opportunity may be in place for the Faringdon based hotel to support the installation of a PAD defibrillator, that would then be available to cover the customer footfall of the Faringdon Retail Area and while this would be both a safe and secure location to place a PAD unit to be available on a 24/7 basis.

Previous investigation of this opportunity, that also coincided with the complexities of the Covid Pandemic, had eventually stalled following exploration of a suitable point at the retail area, at that time with the support of property managers, where an appropriate connection into an electrical supply for the cabinet, could not be found.

The situation concerning the potential installation of a PAD at that location, remains an important priority for the PAD committee, given the nature of the retail area being accessed on a 7 day week 24/7 basis and where there is at any one time a higher footfall of customers to those retail outlets.

The committee invite any support for comment and for any further guidance that might be available in the process of progressing the situation at the retail area near the A420. Any future advance towards progress on this situation will be notified in due course by us, and as we anticipate the support of the national office for the BHF in partnership with Travelodge, going forward.

7. The committee also considers it to be an important aspect of its role, to be able to encourage and support the installation of PAD defibrillators, wherever it is practicable, into the new areas of residential development, in and around the community of Faringdon. To this end, there is the requirement for both political and economic support that requires both energy and commitment to bring such a plan into fruition. We believe that this is possible and could be available to the newly developed, and those areas planned for development, where the installation of these units would best benefit our residents who reside further away from those units already available and that are otherwise some distance from their family homes.

Our committee would like to take the opportunity to be able to promote and to lobby on the benefits of such an endeavour that would support the health and wellbeing of the residents of our community. However, there are limitations as to how much we are able to achieve and given the tasks in hand currently, along with then being in small numbers on an already busy committee.

We would welcome any opportunity for support both from within our local community and outside, including our local authorities, planners and developers, that might be available and

from those with a small amount of expertise, in taking on the further promotion, funding and eventual application of this particular and we believe very worthy cause.

We would welcome comment and ideas from those who would wish to support this objective.

8. Funding status - There is current funding available to the committee that had previously been provided for the installation of a defibrillator in the retail area adjacent to the A420. While this remains as set-aside for this purpose, the committee is in the process of applying for additional funds that will need to be available for the maintenance and up-keep of the current defibrillators that sit under its 'guardianship' and into the future.

It is estimated that a sum of approximately £200.00 per year will be required to support this activity and for the up-keep of the PAD's over their life-time and to look forward to their potential replacement after a period of ten to twelve years.

A number of local funding opportunities have been identified and progress is being made on making applications for grants that will provide for a sustainable means to be able support the Pad's, and towards the additional expense of maintaining new units that could become available and under the guardianship of the committee.

The committee does not set itself the task of fundraising towards the installation of PAD's in the community. However in support of local initiatives where groups or individuals may wish to suitably locate a PAD within their area, either residential or business space, then we would be in a position to advise and support the process of acquiring a unit and cabinet (if appropriate) as a package and to provide guidance towards those organisations or authorities who may be able to provide grant aiding or funding in order to cover the costs involved.

9. The committee seeks opportunities for raising the awareness to members of the Faringdon community, on the use of Defibrillators and the importance of these being available along with CPR to support the casualty of an 'Out of Hospital' cardiac arrest.

At this time and following a request from local committee of the British Heart Foundation for our support, we are now in the planning stage of a local 'Public Safety Awareness Day', an event taking place in Faringdon on Saturday 8th June to run sessions and demonstrations on the practice of CPR and the use of defibrillators.

This event supported by Faringdon Town Council and our local emergency services, may serve as an opportunity for members of our community to be aware and to practice 'hands-on' CPR to gain the important knowledge, in how to maintain basic life-support to a casualty prior to the arrival of an emergency ambulance and in a 'minutes-count' situation.

You will be invited to 'drop-in' and to view or to participate in these activities that will include the opportunity to partake in refreshments and for which we would welcome a small donation towards the funds of those organisations taking part.

Further advertising of this event with details of the day's arrangements will be made available on the next publication of the Faringdon Advertiser and other appropriate notice boards.

10. I do hope that the information and account here, of the activities and involvement of the Faringdon PAD Committee, provides for some reasonable feedback on our endeavours as local volunteers, to provide for the health and wellbeing of our community of Faringdon over this past year.

Should you have any comments or ideas as to how we can help further in our aims towards supporting our local community in this way, then please make contact with us and through Faringdon Town council at the Pump House.

11. We will in due course be able to announce a date and time for our planned AGM and for the opportunity to welcome any members of our local community to become involved and to support our committee. Should you feel so inspired to take up such an opportunity in the meantime and prior to this event then please get in touch and we will certainly be happy to speak with you and for whatever support you may be able to give.

We are currently in need of a person to act as secretary and in the principle role of minute taking at occasional meetings, also in support of committee correspondence required from time to time. We would welcome an opportunity to talk to you and if you are able to give assistance to our committee.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking our funders and the Faringdon community for providing us with the support towards our aims and endeavours as a committee.

Malcolm Gee

On behalf of – Faringdon PAD Committee –

21st April 2024.