

**Cllrs Lucy Edwards and Bethia Thomas**

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We have been continuing our supportive work for residents and communities. As always, if you have any questions or would like to meet with us, please get in touch. Our contact details are at the bottom of this report and we will be holding our last surgery of the year on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December.

**Round-Up of Local Issues**

*Not all items are covered here, with a selection of the main updates listed below. Please get in touch for further details on these or other items.*

- **Damaged Wall, Stanford Road:** After two years of chasing continued pressure on Sovereign has finally led to action to resolve this issue. It has been reported that the final stages of procurement are going ahead to rebuild the collapsed wall and we are awaiting confirmation of the date works will commence.
- **Flooding, Coxwell Road:** After a site visit with Wain Homes, we are awaiting updates to identify the responsible party, either Wain Homes and development site, or the landowner on the opposite side of the road. Vale and OCC have been working together to resolve the situation. We will report any news in the new year.
- **Lighting, Gloucester Street Car Park** – The lighting had been rectified with a temporary fix last month. Final works were not predicted to have any further impact on the operation of the lights or usability of the car park and may have already taken place.
- **Safety Railing, Gloucester Street Car Park** – We reopened this issue, as a request lodged by Elms School several years ago had been stuck; sadly this legal/property issue has not been resolved but we will continue to follow this up.
- **New Equipment, FLC** – Faringdon Leisure Centre has recently taken delivery of £44,000 worth of state-of-the-art equipment that will replace the old resistance machines in the gym. We had received some complaints that the replacement spin cycles were not “up-to-scratch”, but after further digging, found that they will soon be fully serviced with new parts including new saddles. The old equipment will be traded in and the funds used for further improvements and additions to the Leisure Centre.
- **Wessex Leisure Funding:** We believe that we have finally secured the S106 Contributions that had been diverted from the town by the previous administration to fund the now defunct “Wessex leisure centre” prior to 2019. One of the issues that had caused problems was the nature of the agreements, specifying that they had to be spent on certain projects making it near impossible to spend on projects in funding; once spent elsewhere, we are securing equivalent fund in compensation which will be ringfenced to be spent in Faringdon.
- **ATP at Faringdon Community College** – This project is on hold until next summer.
- **SEND School Application** – We await further updates.

## **District Update**

### **Budget Setting at the Vale**

District councillors are currently working through their budget setting process for 2025/26. Central government is expected to release its financial settlement in the W/C 16<sup>th</sup> December. This is very late, and again is only allowing the council to plan for a single year, which does not help us when we need to consider a Medium Term Financial Position, and it continues to lobby government to provide a more secure, forward looking financial plan for councils in the future. While we predict a balanced budget for 2025/26, a number of factors will mean that the council will be facing greater financial pressures in the future, and we will be reviewing all services over the coming year. When we took over the council in 2019 it was predicted that we would be forced into issuing a Section 114 notice, with the threat of 'bankruptcy' as other councils have over the last few years; however, with careful stewardship we have maintained a positive financial outlook and will continue in this vein. Unlike town and parish councils and the PCC, we are limited in the amount of council tax we are allowed to access with limits on increases set by central government.

### **Switchboard update**

As part of our ongoing customer transformation programme, we are pleased to report our Switchboard is expected to move back in house from Capita at the end of this month. From the end of November, we will be using a new automated switchboard system – this means that up to 80 percent of all switchboard calls can continue to be routed through to the right person or team automatically. Anyone who can't navigate the automated system – or doesn't know who they want to speak to – will be able to speak to one of our customer service advisors, who will try to resolve their enquiry or will put them through to someone who can. The aim is to resolve more enquiries quickly at the first time of asking, which will provide a better service for our residents, and should reduce the number of very basic calls to officers.

### **New tourism and local events website**

Recently the council launched the new [Visit Southern Oxfordshire](#) website. It is packed with things to do in our districts both for visitors and residents alike – right now you can find out about what's going on over the festive period from light switch-ons and pantomimes, to festive markets and Santa Dashes – there's something for everyone!

### **Warm spaces**

Local libraries, leisure centres and other organisations are providing a warm welcome for people in this winter. If you know of an organisation planning to be a warm space during the winter months please do encourage them to add their details to the website, where residents can find a warm space near to them. We will be sharing warm space details on social media. Further details can be found at: [Warm Welcome Spaces](#).

## **Calling all Binfluencers – join our new WhatsApp channel!**

We've just launched new WhatsApp channels to help keep people informed about our waste and recycling services, including changes to collections during adverse weather and occasional reuse, reduce and recycle messages. The main aim of the channel is to encourage local Binfluencers to sign up and share updates with their local community.

People can follow our Channel now by visiting:

[Vale of White Horse Binfluencers!](#)

[whatsapp.com/channel/0029VawmLgQ2ZjCtTb0D2E0M](https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VawmLgQ2ZjCtTb0D2E0M)

## **Contact Details**

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