

Reports from May AGM continued

District Councillor (Marcham and Shippon): Jane Hanna



On the Vale I am a member of the Social Overview Committee responsible for overseeing housing decisions and have supported families over the

last year who are on the housing register. I have also taken up individual and parish complaints with the Vale in areas of litter, dog-bins and planning enforcement.

Key areas to report in relation to the performance of the District Council are:

Tax and Finance

Vale charges the 8th lowest District Council tax out of 238 authorities in the country.

The Vale is also in the top 5 in the country for its collection rate of Council Tax from Domestic and Business properties with over 99.5% of all tax due collected. This helps keep Council Tax down for all residents.

Reserves have grown with the present administration from £44 million in 1995 to £80 million and the Council has been praised for its robust and sensible financial management. The Council is lobbying government to axe Council Tax in favour of a local income tax

Supporting People

Along with other Oxfordshire Councils the Vale has been awarded Beacon Council Status by the Government for its work in 'Supporting People'

Recycling and the Environment

Recycling rates have now risen to 20% which has helped the County to have the best record of any Authority in England for the amount of waste produced per capita. This reduces significantly the amount of Landfill Tax which the Council has to pay out of its revenue. The Vale carried out an intensive litter picking programme on the A34 during April. 200 refuse sacks were recovered from the first 4 kilometre stretch !

Local Services Point

Abingdon Services Point was accredited with an international quality standard and a survey of users found that 95% of residents were happy with the service provided

Health

The Vale has been active in working to safeguard local health services and the public's say in changes in health service planning. The PCT has dropped it's plans for now to progress to formal consultation phase on the closure of local community hospitals. The PCT has decided to site a GP out of hours facility in Abingdon from September.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS FROM JUNE

Disposal of refuse and garden waste

The grass cutting season is upon us and the Council has been notified about grass cuttings being dumped along rural footpaths. The Vale of White Horse District Council will collect garden refuse if it is placed in the green plastic sacks which can be purchased from the District Council. Alternatively it can be taken to the Civic Amenity Site at Drayton which is open seven days a week 8.30 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. or composted. For details of the home composter contact "The Waste Team". Freepost OF 1768, Vale of White Horse, The Abbey House. Abingdon OX14 3BR. Remember fly tipping is illegal. The Environment Agency successfully prosecutes in Oxfordshire. Courts can impose fines of up to £20,000 or 6 months imprisonment.

Refuse Bags & Litter

Comments have also been made to the Parish Council about litter in the village. Some of the problem may be caused by refuse bags being left out too early sometimes several days before the due day for collection. This results in the bags becoming split with access for cats and other animals. The Council would ask residents to act responsibly as far as garden refuse and litter are concerned and to help keep the village tidy.

Low Flying Helicopters

The Parish Council has received comments that helicopters are flying low during the day causing nuisance. RAF Benson has confirmed that most of the helicopters in the area are based at Benson although some may be on training exercises from Hampshire. There are no height restrictions on military aircraft so flying heights are determined by the particular exercise being undertaken. RAF Benson apologies for any nuisance, but it does try and rotate the areas where flying is carried out.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

This legislation makes it an offence not to clear up after your dog in public places such as footways and recreation grounds. The Council would remind everyone that it is an offence not to clear up where your dog fouls in public areas and you face a fine of £1000 if prosecuted. Often dogs off their leads follow owners several metres behind. Would dog owners therefore keep an eye on their dogs and be aware of what they are doing. There are several dog waste bins around the village which are emptied on a regular basis. Would dog walkers please remember to use them.

Thames Valley Police – Community Officer of the Year Award

The search has now started to find a winner for this year's Community Officer of the Year and the public is being encouraged to nominate officers who they feel should be rewarded for the service they provide

to their communities. Entrants will be judged on their personal skills, local initiatives they have organised to combat crime and their working relationships with their communities. If you would like to nominate a community officer nomination forms are available electronically at www.thamesvalley.police.uk/communityofficer, or from Laura Parsons, Corporate Information, Police Headquarters, Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxon. OX5 2NX tel 01865 8446350. The deadline for all nominations is 16th July. 2004.

Open Days at the County Council's Museums Resource Centre. Standlake

Treasures that are not permanently on view in Oxfordshire museums will be among the attractions at special open days at the County Council's Museums Resource Centre, Standlake. Tours will take visitors behind the scenes at the centre to see the museums reserve collections including archaeology, fine art, crafts, textiles, social history, agricultural and industrial material - all from Oxfordshire and relating to the lives of people and organisations from the county. Tours, which must be booked in advance, will take place on 1st July, 2nd September, and 7th October. Please telephone 01865 300972 to book.

Date of Next Meeting:

Wednesday 14th July 2004 at 7.30 p.m. in the residents' lounge Duffield Place. Clerk: Mrs. L. Martin, 90 Howard Cornish Road, Marcham Tel: 01865 391833

Dear Editor

I was very pleased to attend the AGM of the Parish Council last month at the Marcham Institute.

One of the concerns raised at the end of the meeting was the prevalence of dog fouling in the village. Dog fouling can be a terrible blight in any area. It is unsightly, dirty and potentially carries very harmful infections, such as toxocarasis.

The law - specifically the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996, passed by the Conservatives, allows local councils to designate any public area as poop scoop areas where dog owners must clear up after their pets. Failure to do so can result in a £1000 fine. In addition, the Vale has a statutory duty to keep clean any public walk or recreation ground.

I am contacting the Vale to establish exactly what procedures they have in place for dealing with dog fouling in Marcham. In the mean time, it would be a good idea if concerned residents could contact me so that we could meet to discuss the problem further.

ED VAIZEY

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Get your letter in the September issue – write by 20th August