

Agenda



Contact: Steve Culliford, Democratic Services
Telephone: 07895 213735
Email: steve.culliford@southandvale.gov.uk
Date: 23 November 2023
Website: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

A meeting of the Cabinet

will be held on Friday 1 December 2023 at 10.30 am
Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

To watch this virtual meeting, follow this link to the council's [YouTube channel](#).

Cabinet Members:

Councillors

Bethia Thomas (Chair)	Lucy Edwards
Mark Coleman (Vice-Chair)	Neil Fawcett
Sue Caul	Andy Foulsham
Andy Crawford	Diana Lugova
Debra Dewhurst	Helen Pighills

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Patrick Arran
Head of Legal and Democratic

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

1. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of interests

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and non-registrable interests or any conflicts of interest in respect of items on the agenda for

this meeting.

3. Urgent business and chair's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

4. Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

5. Recommendations and updates from other committees

To consider any recommendations to Cabinet from other committees.

6. Joint Local Plan 2041 - Approval of Preferred Options Document for Public Consultation

(Pages 3 - 11)

To consider the head of policy and programmes' report.

7. Car park fees for 2024/25

(Pages 12 - 35)

To consider the head of development and corporate landlord's report.

8. Request for Section 106 funds to Chilton Parish Council - Play area/recreation ground improvements

(Wards Affected: Blewbury and Harwell)

(Pages 36 - 43)

To consider the head of finance's report.

9. Council tax base 2024/25

(Pages 44 - 48)

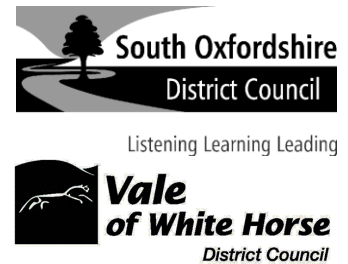
To consider the head of finance's report.

10. Council tax reduction scheme

(Pages 49 - 53)

To consider the head of finance's report.

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Policy and Programmes

Author: Andrew Lane

E-mail: Andrew.Lane@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

South Cabinet member responsible: Anne-Marie Simpson

Tel: 07738 568907

E-mail: Anne-Marie.Simpson@southoxon.gov.uk

Vale Cabinet member responsible: Andy Foulsham

Tel: 07977 416133

E-mail: andy.foulsham@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: Joint Scrutiny Committee, 27 November 2023

To: South Cabinet, 30 November 2023

To: Vale Cabinet, 1 December 2023

Joint Local Plan 2041 – Approval of Preferred Options Document for Public Consultation

Recommendation for Joint Scrutiny Committee:

The Committee is being asked to review this report and share any comments or recommendations with South and Vale Cabinets (meeting on 30 November & 1 December respectively).

Recommendations for South and Vale Cabinets:

- (a) To approve the Preferred Options version of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041 and supporting documents for a six-week period of public consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- (b) To delegate authority to the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the South Cabinet Member for Planning and the Vale Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Policy and Programmes, to make any necessary minor amendments, updates or corrections to the Joint Local Plan and supporting documents/ mapping/ appendices, prior to commencement of the consultation period.

Purpose of report

1. To summarise the progress made to date with preparation of the Joint Local Plan, including explaining how comments raised during previous public and internal consultation have influenced its structure and content.
2. To seek both Cabinets' approval for the next stage of public consultation on the Joint Local Plan, which will be a Preferred Options consultation proposed for January – February 2024.

Corporate objectives

3. The key themes for the Joint Local Plan have been identified from, and inspired by, the main planning issues and priorities set out in the councils' Corporate Plans. These themes are:
 - Reducing Carbon Emissions
 - Nature Recovery and Landscape
 - Protecting and Enhancing Local Heritage
 - Thriving Inclusive Communities
 - Transport and Facilities
 - Healthy Lifestyles and Safe Communities
 - Jobs and Opportunities for Innovation

Background

4. Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils are working together to produce a Joint Local Plan. Local planning authorities must prepare their local plan, setting planning policies for their area, in a manner consistent with national policy, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
5. Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires public consultation as part of the process of local plan preparation in its formative stages, where local authorities should invite representations about what a local plan ought to contain.
6. The NPPF, at paragraph 16c, also requires 'early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees.'
7. The Joint Local Development Scheme highlighted the intention to split the Regulation 18 consultation into two main stages, with an 'Issues' consultation in 2022, followed by a 'Preferred Options' consultation in 2024.
8. In accordance with the above, we undertook a six-week period of public consultation from 12 May to 23 June 2022 on an Issues Consultation Document, in order to facilitate timely and effective preparation of our emerging Joint Local Plan. This document set out a draft Vision for the Plan, highlighting goals for the future and explaining what the councils wanted to achieve. Seven key themes were then identified to support delivery of the Vision and, under each, the document asked for comments and suggestions on what the Joint Local Plan could do to address important spatial challenges and opportunities within South and Vale.

9. The Planning Policy Team worked closely with communications colleagues to prepare an online, interactive version of the Issues document, which sat alongside the more traditional desktop-published version. Through the use of engaging visuals, a range of media types and a concise, user-friendly and specifically ordered consultation document, the aim was to encourage a wider range of new audiences to engage with our Local Plan process from the outset, in addition to the usual residents, businesses and organisations.
10. Overall, the Issues Consultation Document was very well received, with high praise for the innovative approach we took towards greater engagement using StoryMaps as an effective digital consultation tool, which led to the councils being shortlisted for the Digital Impact category in the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards. Our websites were also recognised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as excellent examples of a digital-first approach to planning.

Progress with Joint Local Plan preparation since Summer 2022

11. For the Issues consultation on the Joint Local Plan, we experimented with inviting both anonymous and named responses, to try to widen participation. This worked well, and we found the views expressed were broadly similar from the anonymous respondents as those who gave their details. We received 314 completed responses to the full Issues Consultation survey from respondents who gave their name, which included those individuals or organisations who responded via email. In addition, we received a total of 2,564 responses from those answering anonymously by clicking answers on the interactive website (adding all their answers to all questions together – NB: this does not mean 2,564 separate respondents). After analysing all the responses received, we updated our **interactive Issues Consultation website** to share the consultation results in February 2023. We also published a full '**Issues Consultation Results**' document in a more traditional document format. The consultation findings have provided a useful insight into the main issues facing our districts and how we can use the Joint Local Plan to address them.
12. Over the past year we have commissioned a wide range of evidence base studies (including a Town Centres and Retail Study, a Zero Carbon Study, and an Employment Land Needs Assessment), the findings of which we have used to help shape our policies and overall Plan strategy. Other studies are currently being produced and will be used to refine our policies and site allocations before we reach the Regulation 19 'Draft Plan' stage in autumn 2024.
13. We have carried out a Settlement Assessment (in-house) to gain a better understanding of how well residents' everyday needs are met in the towns, villages and smaller settlements of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. This Assessment included the collection of information on levels of service provision, population size, number of households, employment opportunities and access to employment, shops, and schools. We sought the help of all the Parish and Town Councils in South and Vale, firstly to shape the methodology we applied to conducting the Assessment and again in July/August 2022, where we asked them to help identify what services and facilities were available within each of the settlements within their administrative area. The findings of the Settlement Assessment have informed the development of our Settlement Hierarchy policy (Policy SP2).

14. Officers have also carried out a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) in-house, which identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and/or economic development uses across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts over the Plan period. The assessment is an important source of evidence to inform plan-making.
15. In order to help draft and refine the emerging Joint Local Plan's policies, we have sought the views of officers from across council departments, holding meetings and sharing draft content with colleagues in Planning (Development Management), Economic Development, Housing, Garden Communities, Climate, Ecology, Landscape and Urban Design.
16. We have received invaluable input and guidance from Members during the Plan preparation process to date. The JLP Steering Group has met nineteen times over the last two years to receive presentations from officers and to comment/provide feedback on particular topics during each meeting. We have also held eight All-Councillor Roundtable sessions covering key JLP matters (including climate change; housing affordability, numbers & mix; spatial strategy; settlement hierarchy; green infrastructure; transport; town centres & retail; and economy & employment), and we have consulted Steering Group Members on the wording of our draft chapters for the Preferred Options consultation document, with amendments made to reflect the comments received, where appropriate.

Preparation of our Preferred Options Document

17. Since our Issues Consultation last year, there have been a number of key changes which have influenced the way in which we have approached the development of our Joint Local Plan Preferred Options.
18. The most significant change has been the unanimous decision of all the Oxfordshire local authorities in August 2022 not to progress with the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (see the [joint statement](#) published online). This has meant that our Joint Local Plan will now identify the housing and economic land requirements for South and Vale, as well as setting the spatial strategy for the districts over the Plan period to 2041, while engaging with our neighbours under the duty to cooperate.
19. In terms of setting housing numbers, officers at South and Vale recommend following the Government's Standard Method for calculating future housing requirements (which is a lower number than the last local plans), plus an uplift to account for the existing unmet need from Oxford that was agreed through the last local plans. We have not included a figure for any new unmet need from Oxford at this time, although Oxford City Council is raising this as an ask of its neighbours.
20. With the new lower requirements and given the healthy level of supply in the pipeline, our new evidence for both housing and employment land needs indicates there is no need to find new greenfield sites like the strategic allocations that South and Vale made in the last local plans.
21. A detailed review of our existing allocated strategic sites has taken place, with a proposal to remove some allocations or a part of an allocation, either because they do not comply with our new preferred spatial strategy or because there are other significant reasons which affect successful delivery of development on the site.

22. In the Joint Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document, we set out our preferred options for each policy topic, alongside other alternatives that we have considered where relevant. We have also included draft policy wording to show what the policy would look like for our preferred option. Draft policy wording is typically provided at the next consultation stage – Regulation 19 – but we feel it is important to share (as bonus material) the detailed draft plan content now, in order to ensure our local communities have the best opportunity to feed into policy development at this key stage of plan preparation.
23. When formulating each draft policy, we have sought to take forward the best aspects from existing South and Vale local plan policies, harmonising policy approaches and taking a cross-boundary view, where appropriate, whilst also recognising the uniqueness of each district and the need for differing policy approaches in certain circumstances. We have also looked at best practice in across all policy areas (such as in relation to net zero and climate change policies), with the ultimate aim of producing a plan which is at the forefront of policy development and is ground-breaking in terms of its style and accessibility to wider audiences.
24. After the Preferred Options stage, the plan will undergo further refinement and testing before we reach the stage of consulting on the Draft Joint Local Plan in the Autumn of 2024. At this stage there will be further material in the evidence base such as viability testing of each policy and each site allocation.

Format of the Consultation

25. Just like with the Joint Local Plan Issues consultation in summer 2022, the councils are taking new approaches to improve accessibility of our plan and boost public participation. Rather than a lengthy pdf document, we anticipate that most users will interact with the plan using a version built using ArcGIS Storymap. This provides a navigable and image-rich experience designed for viewing on a mobile phone or tablet, with the opportunity to use interactive maps and other engaging features.
26. A short online document, which we are calling the ‘Joint Local Plan in a Nutshell’, will provide a summary of our plan, with simple questions around its key headlines and direction. We anticipate that this will be a popular and straightforward way for the general public to give feedback on the plan.
27. We have prepared an interactive digital online Policies Map to show where different policies will apply and where the allocations are located. This map enables users to click a hyperlink to see the relevant written policy in the local plan.
28. Various evidence base reports and topic papers will also be published, which we have prepared to explain the background/ rationale to the formulation of particular policies, site allocations etc.
29. The community engagement team is working with the planning policy team to help design multi-format consultation materials and plan a series of exhibitions/ engagement opportunities, with the aim of achieving wide participation and ensuring that needs of different groups are met.

Supporting documents

30. Alongside the Joint Local Plan, we need to carry out both Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of our emerging policies and site allocations. These assessments will make sure the Plan considers the relevant environmental, social, and economic issues and minimises any potential negative impacts.
31. We have appointed consultants to conduct both the SA and HRA of our Plan and they have worked with officers to revise our draft SA Framework and sustainability objectives and to develop a series of detailed decision-making criteria, against which the emerging policies and site allocations have been assessed and refined. The latest iteration of the Sustainability Appraisal report, as well as a high-level preliminary HRA screening report (appended to this report), will be published alongside Preferred Options consultation document to allow consultees to consider and comment on the assessed effects of our preferred approach and the alternative.

Options

32. There are some changes on the horizon to the planning system and to Government planning policy. A Government consultation on a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been anticipated for some time now. Consequently, we could choose to consult on our 'Preferred Options' at a later date, when we have more certainty about the direction that national planning policy and the new Levelling Up legislation will be taking. However, this would delay our progress with preparing the Joint Local Plan and prevent us from meeting the JLP timescales set out in the Joint Local Development Scheme, approved in September 2023. It would also delay the councils from introducing stronger planning policies that help us to address the climate emergency.
33. Opting to wait is likely to mean that we find ourselves in a situation where we cannot submit the Plan for examination before the deadline proposed by government under the transition arrangements to a new local plan system. This could mean we would be limited to adopting a narrower suite of local plan policies, set at national level. There is concern that these nationally-set policies could potentially stifle our policy ambition and innovation if they do not go as far as the policies currently drafted in our Preferred Options document, particularly those relating to net zero and taking action on climate change. Government's latest consultation indicated that current emerging local plans would need to be submitted for examination no later the 30 June 2025 and adopted by 31 December 2026. If either are missed, then the Councils would need to prepare a new style local plan instead.

Climate and ecological impact implications

34. The Corporate Plans have inspired the key themes and direction of the Joint Local Plan. In particular, the Plan provides a clear opportunity to further Corporate Plan objectives on reducing carbon emissions, supporting nature recovery and protecting valued landscapes.
35. The draft vision for the Joint Local Plan sets ambitions for our districts to become:
 - carbon neutral districts for current and future generations;

- places where local residents can reach the facilities they need for everyday living on foot, bicycle or by zero-emission and low carbon transport choices; and
- places where people are safe from pollution, flooding, and the effects of climate change.

36. The Joint Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document has been shaped throughout by recognising that the councils have a commitment and a duty to tackle the climate emergency, reduce carbon emissions, increase biodiversity and reverse nature's decline. The Plan contains policy options designed to improve and address these challenges, and these are now ready for consultation.

Financial implications

37. The decision to commence 'Preferred Options' consultation will incur some costs associated with the engagement activities, editing, printing and couriering of documents for deposit at local libraries/Abbey House as well as the production costs of leaflets and display boards. These costs can all be met from within existing budgets.

Legal implications

38. All aspects of Joint Local Plan preparation have been undertaken in accordance with the relevant planning legislation and regulations.

Risks

39. If consultation on the Joint Local Plan (Preferred Options) does not commence in January 2024 as proposed in this report, the councils will not be able to meet the plan preparation timetable set out in the Joint LDS, which would have several consequences as highlighted in paragraphs 32 and 33 above.

40. This report will be considered separately by South and Vale Cabinets, so in order to progress with the Preferred Options consultation, there is a requirement for approval from both Cabinets.

Other implications

41. An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Joint Local Plan has been carried out by officers and will be published alongside the Preferred Options consultation document. This identifies policy options that may differentially impact different groups within the community (positively or negatively), considering the nine protected characteristics, rural communities and areas of deprivation. A commentary describes any differential impacts and identifies any actions or mitigations to reduce any negative impacts.

42. Most of our policies are considered unlikely to differentially impact any specific groups and we anticipate that several policies may offer positive impacts for some groups. However, the EQIA does indicate that Policy SP1 (Spatial Strategy) may require mitigation. This policy directs new development towards the most built-up settlements in the districts and therefore supports development in the most sustainable locations. This is expected to have a positive impact for rural communities in maintaining the character of smaller settlements. However, it could also have negative impacts in

directing the new infrastructure and services associated with new development towards more built-up settlements rather than to more rural parts of our districts.

43. We will review feedback from the Preferred Options Consultation, as well as any emerging evidence, to determine whether Policy SP1 requires further amendment. If this policy were to be adopted with little or no amendment, we would need to monitor the above potential impacts. SP1 encourages neighbourhood planning groups to address the needs of local communities, which could offer some mitigation for any potential negative impacts faced by rural communities.
44. The Equality Impact Assessment will require updating for the next stage of plan preparation (Reg 19), taking into account any changes to policy wording resulting from new evidence and/or consultation feedback.

Conclusion

45. Publishing a Preferred Options document for a minimum of a six-week consultation period will facilitate timely and effective progression and preparation of the Joint Local Plan for Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils, allowing the Planning Policy team to gather a wide range of comments and views which will help us to refine our policies and site allocations, before finalising our Draft (Regulation 19) Plan next year.
46. Any necessary minor amendments or corrections to the Joint Local Plan or supporting documents/mapping that are required prior to commencement of the public consultation will be agreed by the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the South Cabinet Member for Planning and the Vale Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Policy and Programmes.

Appendices

1. Preferred Options Consultation Document (link to Storymap interactive version and PDF version)
2. Joint Local Plan in a Nutshell
3. Emerging Policies Map (link to the interactive site)
4. Equalities Impact Assessment
5. Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan - Nov 2023
6. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Preliminary Screening Report – Nov 2023

Appendix 1: Preferred Options Consultation Document (Storymaps Version), link: <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/>

The report has six appendices as follows. Due to the large size, the appendices are listed separately on the agenda pages for SODC

<https://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=341&MId=3240>

And VOWHDC:

<https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=3182>

1. Preferred Options Consultation Document (provided in two formats, [weblink](#) to our online interactive version and as a PDF on the agenda webpage)
2. Joint Local Plan in a Nutshell (PDF on the agenda webpage)
3. Emerging Policies Map ([Weblink](#) only)
4. Equalities Impact Assessment (PDF on the agenda webpage)
5. Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan - Nov 2023 (PDF on the agenda webpage)
6. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Preliminary Screening Report – Nov 2023 (PDF on the agenda webpage)

The weblinks provided show the documents in the way they will appear online during the consultation.

Officers encourage using the link to view the Joint Local Plan Preferred Options via the interactive website, in order to see the content in its best format and how it will be publicly presented.

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Development and Corporate Landlord

Author: John Backley

Telephone: 01235 422667

Textphone: 18001 01235 42267

E-mail: john.backley@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: all

Cabinet member responsible: Mark Coleman

Tel: 07483 224436

E-mail: mark.coleman@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: CABINET

Date: 1 December 2023

Car park fees for 2024-25

Recommendations

- (a) Cabinet to agree the car parking fees for the financial year 2024-25.

In addition, if cabinet does agree to amend the fees and charges that require a change in the car parking fees or order, to:

- (b) authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic to prepare a Notice of Variation under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 for publishing in the local newspaper and all affected car parks. (Or authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic to prepare and publish a draft order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984)
- (c) authorise the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord to oversee necessary communications and consultations and report back to Cabinet.

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides information to help cabinet decide if it chooses to amend the car park fees and charges in the Vale of White Horse District Council's three market towns of Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage.
2. Reviewing the car park fees and charges each year is in line with the council's car park policy as updated in 2022.

Corporate Objectives

3. The provision and pricing of car parking supports the Vale Council's Corporate Plan 2020/24 and strategic objective three (building healthy communities) by encouraging

the switch to more active sustainable travel options, improving air quality and supports objective four (building stable finances) by maximising income available to the council.

4. Reviewing how much we charge for car park fees also supports our Corporate Plan objective three, “action on the climate emergency”. Transport, including fossil fuel vehicles, makes up the largest share of the UK’s carbon emissions. Using mediums such as car park fees may have the ability to influence changes in transport behaviour, and support a move towards alternative, sustainable modes of transport such as active travel like walking, public transport and cycling.

Background

5. The new car park policy as agreed by cabinet in August 2022 included guidance from the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 which states that local authority parking enforcement should be self-financing, and we should aim for our parking income to at least meet the cost of managing and running our car parks.
6. The current fees and charges and the price of permits (and the previous years’ fees) are shown in Appendix 1 and a comparison of car park fees with other neighbouring car parks is shown in Appendix 2.
7. In February 2022 the cabinet agreed to make changes to the car park fees as below, which was implemented on 4 April 2022:
 - A. To reduce free parking from two hours to one hour and introduce a charge of £1.50 for up to two hours.
 - B. Increase all current fees by 40 pence.
 - C. To make permits non-transferable between car parks.
8. Officers estimated that the above changes would increase income by £218,000 per year. In reality the income from car park fees increased from £245,000 in 2021-22 to £503,000 in 2022-23, an increase of £258,000.
9. Last year in December 2022, cabinet agreed to increase permits by 10 percent. This was implemented on 4 April 2023.
10. Officers estimated that the increase in the cost of permits would increase the income by £7,000 per year. Year to date (up to period six) show parking season ticket income at £40,187 against half year budget of £35,268, so £4,919 above budget after six months.
11. Cabinet agreed to stop issuing any new residential permits from December 2020. All new applicants now pay the ‘normal’ permit price and no new resident permits are being issued. After 2024, only regular parking permits will be available. For those residents that had residential permits prior to this change it was agreed for existing residential permit holders to increase their permits by 10 percent each year for four years, so these residential permit holders would still get a lower rate, but no new residential permits would be issued. Residential permits are only renewed for those customers who had them before they were stopped in 2020.
12. Please see the table 1 below which shows the increase in cost in permits as already agreed from 1 April 2024.

Table 1. Change to residential parking permits up to 2024

Residential permit costs during phasing out period (Only available to those who had residential permits as of 30 November 2020)								
Town	Type of permit	Length of permit	Residential permits available at	Cost of residential permits Nov. 2020 (£)	Price from 1/12/20 initial increase by 25% (£)	Price from 1/04/22 plus 10% (£)	Price from 1/04/23 plus 10% (£)	Price from 1/04/24 plus 10% (£)
Abingdon	Monday to Sunday	Annual	Cattlemarket Charter Audlett Drive Abbey Close West St Helen Street	287	429	472	520	572
		Six Month		144	215	237	260	286
Abingdon	Monday to Sunday	Annual	Rye Farm / Hales Meadows	287	386	425	467	514
		Six Months		144	194	213	234	258
Faringdon	Monday to Saturday	Annual	Gloucester Street	119	178	196	216	237
Wantage	Monday to Saturday	Annual	Portway	119	178	196	216	237
Wantage	Monday to Saturday	Annual	Mill St / Limborough Road	143	232	256	281	309
		Six Month		72	123	135	149	163

13. The car park penalty charges are set by legislation which changed on 1 November 2022 when we introduced civil parking enforcement (CPE). The maximum penalty charges under CPE are now £70 which is lower than previously (£80). In addition, there are now two 'levels' (for example 'minor' infractions such as overstaying your time set at £50 reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days and some are higher for example if you park in a disabled bay without displaying a blue badge, set at £70 reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days). All charges are increased if the penalty charge remains unpaid after 28 days and the council issues a charge certificate and then there are further increase if the case is registered as a debt.
14. The purpose of having car park orders under Section 32 of the 1984 Road Traffic Regulations Act (RTRA) is for 'relieving or preventing congestion of traffic'. The council meets this requirement by having off-street car parks which are accessible and well used which means that people do not park on the highway which may cause traffic to be held up. Under the new civil parking regulations, the council has no legal powers to set parking fees at a higher level than that needed to achieve this but is able to set fees at a level to at least cover car park operating costs.

Car park account

15. Table 2 below estimates how the net cost of car parks will change over a five-year period up to 2026/27 if no changes are made. Reviewing the income and expenditure over the medium term allows cabinet to take a view of how income and expenditure are likely to change and see whether the account is predicted to run at a loss or with a surplus.
16. The actual turnout for 2022/23 shows a deficit in the car park account of £19,209.
17. Based on the first six months of income and expenditure in 2023/24, officers estimate the income from 'pay and display' fees will produce an estimated total of £500,884. Overall, there is therefore an estimated deficit of £93,458 this year which increases to £230,226 in 2026/27.
18. A ten per cent increase in residential permits prices (as previously agreed) will increase income by an estimated £1,199 in 2024/25 and then move onto standard permit rates so another 25 percent increase on 1 April 2025 which is £3,300.

Table 2. Car park income and expenditure over a five-year period.

	Actual	Estimated	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	2022/23	Outturn	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£	£	£	£	£
Car park expenditure					
Employees	-	6,096.81	6,401.65	6,721.73	7,057.82
Contract costs (Saba)	243,293.12	281,596.00	295,675.80	310,459.59	325,982.57
Premises (repair and maint. elec.)	246,294.34	230,280.00	241,794.00	253,883.70	266,577.89
Supplies and services (banking)	39,003.20	44,400.00	46,620.00	48,951.00	51,398.55
Central and administrative	42,618.85	81,561.00	85,639.05	89,921.00	94,417.05
Depreciation	65,788.16	64,788.16	68,654.83	91,054.83	104,554.83
Total expenditure:	636,997.67	708,721.96	744,785.32	800,991.85	849,988.70
Car park income					
Enforcement	(39,410)	(40,545)	(40,545)	(40,545)	(40,545)
Season tickets	(74,957)	(70,835)	(72,034)	(75,334)	(75,334)
Pay and display	(503,421)	(500,884)	(500,884)	(500,884)	(500,884)
Other income	0	(3,000)	(3,000)	(3,000)	(3,000)
Total income	(617,789)	(615,264)	(616,463)	(619,763)	(619,763)
Surplus (-) / deficit	19,209	93,458	128,322	181,229	230,226

Options for fees and charges

19. Based on the current usage and estimated income and expenditure shown in Table 2, considering the estimated deficit of £93,458 in 2023-24 and increasing in the medium term, officers propose a number of options in order to set the car park account to at least 'break even' in the medium term.

Table 3. Summary of options

Option	Description	Estimated change in revenue (pa)	Communications campaign recommended?	Can be dealt with by a Notice of Variation?
A	No change	£0	No	N/A
B	Remove the one-hour free parking and charge a nominal amount of 50p.	+£300,000	Yes	No, require formal consultation and a new Order
C	Extend Sunday parking charges to all car parks	+£40,000	Yes	No, require formal consultation and a new Order
D	A proposed differential pricing structure using a higher tier of charging for town centre car parks and a lower tier of charging for car parks on edge of town (maintain one hour free).	+£50,000	Yes	Yes
E1	Evening charging: - a flat fee of £1 from 6pm to 9pm or,	+£95,000	Yes	No, all options require formal consultation and a new Order
E2	- extend charging period until 9pm Monday to Saturday (currently 6pm)	+£160,000	Yes	
E3	- extend charging period until 7pm Monday to Saturday	+£53,000		

F	Half price permits for zero emission vehicles	Reduced by £5,000	Yes	No, require formal consultation and a new Order
G	Increase the cost of permits by 10%	+£6,800	Contact existing permit holders	Yes
H	Increase fees across the board by 10%.	+£50,000	Yes	Yes
I	Increase overnight parking for campervans to £10.00 per overnight stay.	De minimis	Yes	Yes

20. Option A. Make no change to the fees and continue to operate car parks at a deficit. This option would go against the agreed policy to provide parking at a cost which falls on the users and not the council taxpayer.
21. Option B. Remove the free parking and charge a nominal amount of 50p for up to one hour. This option would largely bring the account to a balanced state.
22. Option C. Extend Sunday parking charges to all car parks. Currently Sunday charging only applies to three car parks in Abingdon (Rye Farm, Hales Meadow and Abbey Close). There are a further five car parks in Abingdon, two car parks in Faringdon and in Wantage three car parks, a total of ten car parks where Sunday charging could be applied. This option would provide a marginal increase in income of £40,000 which would not be sufficient to 'break even'.
23. Option D. Creating 'higher rate' parking spaces closest to the major amenities, by increasing the fees in those car parks closest to the town centre only (Civic, Cattlemarket and West St Helen's St. and Abbey Close in Abingdon, Portway and Mill St car park in Wantage and Southampton St. car park in Faringdon).
24. At the same time, the fees in car parks situated on the edges of the town centre would decrease slightly (Audlett Drive, Rye Farm and Hales Meadow in Abingdon, Gloucester St in Faringdon and Limborough Rd. in Wantage). Please see table 4b below for proposed fees.
25. This option is estimated to increase income by £50,000 which would go some way to having a break-even account.
26. Options E1, E2 and E3. Officers do not have any formal usage figures for evening parking after 6pm but anecdotal evidence and informal observations suggest the usage is quite high up to 9pm, Monday to Saturday. The estimated increase in income (E1 £95,000/E2 £160,000/E3 £53,000) includes for the extra cost of additional enforcement 6pm to 9pm. The current charging times are Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm in most car parks. If agreed the extended charging period would not apply on a Sunday to those car parks that charge (Rye Farm, Hales Meadow and Abbey close car parks charge 8am to 6pm on Sundays).

27. Option F. Half price permits for plug-in EVs. This will be in line with the Vale's actions on climate change to become carbon neutral within our operations by 2030.
28. Option G. Increase in cost of permits by 10 percent to be considered together with option H below.
29. Option H. Increase all fees across the board by ten percent. This increase in income of an estimated £50,000 would follow the economic pattern of increases in the economy measured against price indexes but not be sufficient to cover all the costs of running the car parks.
30. Option I. Parking for camper vans and overnight sleeping in Hales Meadow car park, Abingdon increase from £7.00 to £10.00 per night. The increase in income is marginal to this option.
31. A new order will be required for the main Vale car parks and a separate one for Rye Farm and Hales Meadow car parks as, although owned by the Vale, these car parks, for the purposes of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, come within the administration area for South Oxfordshire District Council.

Table 4a. A proposed differential pricing structure (town centre car parks in yellow and edge of town car parks in blue showing current fees)

Location/ Postcode	1 Hours	2 Hours	3 Hours	4 Hours	6 Hours	Over 6 Hours	Motor Home 24hr	Operational	
								Days	Times
Abingdon									
Abbey Close - OX143JE	Free	1.50	2.30	4.20	5.10	6.10		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Audlett Drive - OX14 3ND	Free	1.50	2.30	4.20	5.10	6.10		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Cattlemarket - OX14 3JE	Free	1.50	2.30	4.20	5.10	6.10		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Civic - OX14 3JH	Free	1.50	2.30	4.20	5.10	6.10		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Hales Meadow - OX14 3NN	Free	1.50	2.30	3.90	4.60	5.10	7.00	Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Rye Farm - OX14 3NN	Free	1.50	2.30	3.90	4.60	5.10		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
West St Helen Street - OX14 5BU	Free	1.50	2.30	4.20	5.10	6.10		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Charter Level 1 - 2 - OX14 3LZ	Free	1.50	2.30					Sat Only	08:00 - 18:00
Faringdon									
Gloucester Street - SN7 7HY	Free	1.50	1.80	3.20	3.40	3.60		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Southampton Street - SN7 7AZ	Free	Free	1.90					Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Wantage									
Limborough Road - OX12 9AJ	Free	1.50	2.10	3.70	4.10	4.60		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Mill Street - OX12 9AJ	Free	1.50	2.10	3.70	4.10	4.60		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00
Portway - OX12 9BU	Free	1.50	2.10	4.10	5.10	6.10		Mon - Sun	08:00 - 18:00

Table 4b. Officers propose a simplified fee structure as below:

Location/ Postcode	1 Hours	2 Hours	3 Hours	4 Hours	6 Hours	Over 6 hours	Motor homes	Operational	
								Days	Times
Town centre car parks	Free	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	N/A	As above	
Edge of town car parks	Free	1.50	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	10.00	As above	

32. Options E1, E2 and E3. Extend the charging period to raise income in the evening from 6pm to 9pm – a flat fee of £1 after 6pm or, extend the charging period until 9pm Monday to Saturday and keep current charging regime or, incremental increase in the charging period by one hour each year (until 7pm in 2024/25, until 8pm in 2025/26 and until 9pm in 2026/27). Depending on the option, Officers estimate the net increase in income of between £95,000, £160,000 and £53,000 per year (including enforcement

costs). This estimate is based on usage during the day as evening usage information is not available.

- 33. Option F. Half price permits for zero emission vehicles. The total income from permits in 2022/23 was £74,957. Officers estimate relatively slow uptake in the first year reducing the income £5,000.
- 34. Option G. Increase the cost of permits in line with inflation i.e. 9.1 percent in August 2023, rounded up. Officers estimate the increase in income will be £6,800 pa.
- 35. Option H. Increase all fees by the current price index of nine percent (rounded up). This would increase income by an estimated £50,000 per year as shown in table 5 below.

Table 5. Proposed increases of all fees by price index

	Current price	Proposed increase by 9% (rounded up)
Up to one hour	Free	Free
Up to 2 hours	£1.50	£1.70
Up to 3 hours	£2.30	£2.60
Up to 4 hours	£3.90	£4.30
Up to 6 hours	£4.60	£5.10
Over 6 hours	£5.10	£5.60

Economic development implications

- 36. Research undertaken by the Institute of Place Management on behalf of the High Streets Taskforce list car parking as one of 237 'Vital and Viable' factors that influence the success of high streets. This research (last updated in November 2021) lists car parking as the 45th most influential factor. (Car parking for the purpose of the study refers to the number or availability of parking spaces, parking costs, maximum parking duration, the location of parking spaces, and the diversity of parking supply).
- 37. Seen alongside 236 other influential factors, it should be understood that although parking is regarded as highly influential, it should not be viewed in isolation as a factor that will dictate the success of the high street economy.
- 38. Guidance on Parking Provision in Town and City Centres published in the study “Re-Think! Parking on the High Street (2013) suggests that the “value” of car parking is more important than the cost. Value in this respect includes both the location and proximity of parking to attractions. Relevant to Vale’s market towns, the report suggests that “smaller locations, with relatively fewer attractions (retail and otherwise) need to carefully consider their parking provision and fees”.
- 39. Option A. No increase in fees could demonstrate support for local businesses.

40. Remaining options from B to H. Any increases in fees could negatively affect footfall to Vale town centres and is likely to cause concern within the business community as they're impacted by the current economic climate and cost of living crisis. Businesses in the Vale's market towns have struggled in recent years with the growth of nearby shopping centres in Oxford and Didcot and internet shopping. Many businesses will think it will discourage local people to make short visits to town centres if the cost of parking is increased.
41. Increasing fees in town centre car parks and thereby encouraging parking at edge of town sites could be seen as having both negative and positive aspects for the economy of our market towns. Reduced congestion and pollution can be positive for perceptions of place, creating a more attractive experience for residents and visitors alike. It may also benefit occupiers on arterial routes into towns via increased passing footfall. Conversely, increasing the distance between attractions and parking is unlikely to be positively received by local retailers, and may disadvantage (or otherwise alienate) residents who are less able to walk longer distances to retail centres including those with young children, those with underlying health conditions that do not qualify for a disabled parking badge, or those with personal safety concerns from accessing and supporting local businesses.
42. For option I, the council parking contractor report very good take up of the bays for camper vans in Hales Meadow car park in Abingdon. Officers have also had good feedback from users as the type of offer of casual parking for camper vans in a location close to the town centre is quite rare in Oxfordshire.
43. Appendix 2 compares car park fees and charges to neighbouring local authorities and shows that current fees remain competitive, even after the increase.
44. Over the last three years, Vale Chambers of Commerce, business groups and individual businesses continually assert that the Vale needs free parking like Witney. They believe that Witney town centre thrives due to the free parking and residents will travel to Witney instead of Abingdon/Faringdon/Wantage if the free parking in the Vale is removed. To date no firm evidence has been gathered or provided.
45. Planning Policy have commissioned a town centres and retail study to help inform the new joint local plan. This report is in progress and will undertake a health check of Vale's market towns, while this study won't examine the impact of parking charges on the town centres, information on accessibility and pedestrian flows will be included within the final reports, detailing public transport and active travel links to our town centres that could present an opportunity for future marketing.
46. Current indications are that leisure and hospitality service providers are occupying a higher proportion of local town centre premises, that may indicate longer parking stays are likely as the focus of the high street changes from retail to more experience led occupancy.

Climate and ecological impact implications

47. Option A. Continuing to offer a period of free parking of one hour may encourage increased vehicle turnover in the town centres and impact negatively on the air quality.
48. Options B to I. Vale of White Horse District Council has agreed a target to work towards being carbon neutral within our operations by 2030, with an aim for a 75

percent reduction in our emissions by 2025, and for the Vale to be a carbon neutral district by 2045.

49. Having reduced fees on the edge of towns may reduce congestion and air pollution in the centre of towns if more users choose to park in car parks on the edge of towns and walk into the town centres.
50. Option F. Clearly demonstrates the initiative to encourage the take up of electric vehicles and therefore reduce pollution from combustion engine vehicle emissions. Climate officers support low-cost parking for EV vehicles owners although it is unlikely to be a key motivator. Introducing reduced price permits for EV's shows positive commitment from the council to the strategic objectives and could be actively promoted through the Communications team.

Financial Implications

51. Refer to summary table 3 (paragraph 19) for estimated changes in total fee income for each option.
52. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to full Council in February 2023 showed that the council was able to set a balanced budget for 2023/24, but that there is expected to be a budget gap in future years. However, there is great uncertainty over this caused by a lack of clarity from government.
53. The future funding gap is predicted to increase to over £7.8 million by 2027/28, based on current cautious officer estimates of future funding levels. Whilst it is anticipated that overall funding for the council will remain relatively unchanged in 2024/25, the lack of certainty on future local government funding from 2025/26 onwards means the level of funding, and the resulting estimated funding gap, could be significantly different from current officer estimates in either a positive or negative way. Every financial decision, particularly those involving medium-term funding commitments (i.e. those beyond 2024/25), needs to be cognisant of the potential for significant funding gaps in future years.
54. Under CPE the car park account should be clear and transparent and published to show the council is not making excess surplus income.
55. In line with legislation under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 para 55 (2), at the end of the financial year any deficit in the (car park) account shall be made good out of the general fund.
56. Any surplus income generated from these increases will need to be used in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 Section 55 specific definitions (Highways, car parks, free public open spaces and recreational facilities).
57. Changes to the schedule can be made by placing Notices in the car parks and by advertising in local newspapers at a cost of £5,000 per Notice which can be met from existing car park budgets. A change to the Order will require advertising a draft Schedule to allow for feedback from the public and a further Notice for the making of the new Order.

58. If a simplified charging system is adopted, future amendments to the car park fees will be easier to manage and at less cost as the advert in the newspaper would be a lot smaller.

Legal Implications

59. A Notice Of Variation under the regulation covers tariff changes only and the Notice requires you to state what the charges are now and what the charges are going to be when the Notice comes into force. It is designed purely to allow for tariffs to be increased on a yearly basis without the need for going through the full making of an Order.

60. Any change other than a tariff change falls outside a Notice of Variation. These should not be dealt with by a Notice of Variation, because it is not a change to an existing tariff but rather the introduction of an additional charge. This would include the case when there is no charge.

61. **Option A** being no change to the current Order.

62. **Option B** is to remove the one-hour free parking and charge a nominal amount of 50p. When the two free hours was reduced to one free hour, this was dealt with by way of a Variation Order with advice that there could be a risk of challenge due to the negative public opinion that would be generated by such a measure. Whilst there was negative feedback, no legal challenge was received. However, Option B is introducing something that doesn't already exist i.e. a charge of 50p and therefore a new order will need to be made at significant cost and officer time.

63. **Option C** is to extend Sunday parking charges to all car parks for which it is agreed that a new car parking order will be required because if charges don't currently exist for those car parks then something different is being introduced.

64. **Option D** is a proposed differential pricing structure using a higher tier of charging for town centre car parks and a lower tier of charging for car parks on edge of town. If this was solely making tariff changes to the charges already payable then this could be dealt with by way of a variation order, but within the report, this option also takes away the current free hour for some car parks and so therefore a new order for this option will be required.

65. **Options E1, E2 and E3** are evening charges– a flat fee of £1 from 6pm to 9pm or extend current charging regime until 9pm or an incremental increase of one hour each year. A new order will be required to either introduce a change to the charging period or to introduce a fee that doesn't currently exist.

66. **Option F** is half price permits for zero emission vehicles. As this is introducing something new to the current Vale order, a new order will be required.

67. **Option G** - the increase the cost of permits by 10 percent can be dealt with by way of a variation order.

68. **Option H** – the fees increase across the board by ten percent can be dealt with by way of a variation order.

69. **Option I** – the increase in daily fees can be made by Notice.

70. Point to note: where a new order is required for Vale then a new order will be needed for the main Vale car parks and a separate one for Rye Farm and Hales Meadow car parks because although owned by the Vale, these car parks, for the purposes of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, come within the administration area for South Oxfordshire District Council.
71. The purpose of having car park orders under Section 32 of the 1984 Road Traffic Regulations Act (RTRA) is for 'relieving or preventing congestion of traffic'. Under the new civil parking regulations, the council has no legal powers to set parking fees at a higher level than that needed to achieve this. The council meets this requirement by having off-street car parks which are accessible and well used meaning that people do not park on the highway which may cause traffic congestion.
72. Statutory guidance under section 87 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 states the financial objectives of CPE are to run enforcement operations efficiently, effectively and economically. The Secretary of State will not expect local or national taxpayers to meet any deficit.

Communications Implications

73. Any of the options agreed will have an impact on users of the car park. Given the current economic climate, the need to be transparent and to provide background information to reasons for the changes, officers recommend a communications campaign to inform stakeholders.
74. Options B, C, D and E are major changes requiring formal consultation and support by communications officers. If agreed officers would aim to implement the changes by 1 June 2024.
75. Relatively simple changes to the fees (options F, G, H and I) can be done by Notice and implemented by 1 April 2024.
76. The outcome of any changes to be clearly communicated to the public by social media and on the council website.

Equality and Diversity

77. The council continues to offer parking at no charge for users displaying a 'blue badge'.
78. The council aims to meet the national standard of at least five percent of car park bays as extra wide bays dedicated to blue badge users.
79. Creating parking cheaper on the edge of town may be challenged by users with mobility issues. Reduced price parking on the edge of towns may be considered as discriminating against those less capable of walking into town centres. Whilst disabled parking is provided in all of our car parks, further equality impact assessment may be required to pursue this option.

Risks

80. Option A. By continuing to offer a period of free parking the Council could be criticised for not taking the opportunity to actively tackle climate issues by discouraging customers traveling by car. If the fees are not increased, the Council could be

criticised for not tackling the deficit of car parking account and going against its own policy. Funds from the general account will be required to balance the car park account.

81. Options B to I. Potential reputational damage to the Council from negative media coverage for the loss of the free period and increase in fees/change to charging periods. Also, the risk highlighted above if car parks are more expensive in the centre of towns and may be challenged by those less able bodied.
82. By increasing the fees, the Council could be criticised for not taking the opportunity to actively support businesses in town centres. Increasing parking fees may change people's habits and they could choose to shop elsewhere. This may impact on the businesses in the town and the car park revenue if the number of visitors to the towns reduces. There is also a risk that due to price elasticity of demand that any projected increase in revenue may be less than estimated.

Conclusion

83. The report has set out a range of options for Cabinet to consider in paragraphs 19 to 35. In setting the fees and charges for the financial year 2024-25, the options provide a range of interventions and there are implications to be considered. There is a balance to be struck between the revenue position, and the economic and climate implications of the options proposed.

Background Papers

- Car park policy 2022
- Car park usage surveys 2023

Appendix 1 Vale of White Horse District Council car park fees and charges and permit changes introduced in April 2022

CAR PARK	TYPE OF PARKING		PERIOD	CHARGES	
	Current Charging Period	New Charging Period		April 2021	New Charges introduced April 2022
Abbey Close Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sun 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sun 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.90	£2.30
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.80	£4.20
			Up to 6 hrs	£4.70	£5.10
			Over 6 hours	£5.70	£6.10
	Permits Mon – Sun Non-transferable		Annual	£857.00	£857.00
			3 months	£256.00	£256.00
			1 month	£86.00	£86.00
	Permits Mon-Fri (5 day) Non-transferable		Annual	£715.00	£715.00
			3 months	£213.00	£213.00
			1 month	£72.00	£72.00
	Cosener's House Day permits 24 hours (in advance)			£6.38	£6.38
	Civic Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge
Up to 2 hrs				No charge	£1.50
Up to 3 hrs				£1.90	£2.30
Up to 4 hrs				£3.80	£4.20
Up to 6 hrs				£4.70	£5.10
Over 6 hours				£5.70	£6.10
Audlett Drive Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.90	£2.30
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.80	£4.20
			Up to 6 hrs	£4.70	£5.10
			Over 6 hours	£5.70	£6.10
	Permits Mon – Sun (7 days) Non-transferable		Annual	£857.00	£857.00
			3 months	£256.00	£256.00
			1 month	£86.00	£86.00
	Permits Mon-Fri (5 day) Non-transferable		Annual	£715.00	£715.00
3 months			£213.00	£213.00	
1 month			£72.00	£72.00	

CAR PARK	TYPE OF PARKING		PERIOD	CHARGES	
	Current Charging Period	New Charging Period		April 2021	New Charges introduced April 2022

Charter M/S Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50	
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.90	£2.30	
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.80	£4.20	
			Up to 6 hrs	£4.70	£5.10	
			Over 6 hours	£5.70	£6.10	
	Permits Mon – Sun Non-transferable	Annual		£857.00	£857.00	
		3 months		£256.00	£256.00	
		1 month		£86.00	£86.00	
	Permits Mon-Fri (5 day) Non-transferable	Annual		£715.00	£715.00	
		3 months		£213.00	£213.00	
		1 month		£72.00	£72.00	
	Annual am or pm Non-transferable	6 days		£429.00	£429.00	
		5 days		£358.00	£358.00	
	Vehicle Release Fee			£50	£50	
West St Helen St Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50	
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.90	£2.30	
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.80	£4.20	
			Up to 6 hrs	£4.70	£5.10	
			Over 6 hours	£5.70	£6.10	
	Permits Mon – Sun (7 days) Non-transferable	Annual		£857.00	£857.00	
		3 months		£256.00	£256.00	
		1 month		£86.00	£86.00	
	Permits Mon-Fri (5 day) Non-transferable	Annual		£715.00	£715.00	
		3 months		£213.00	£213.00	
		1 month		£72.00	£72.00	
	Cattle Market Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
				Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
				Up to 3 hrs	£1.90	£2.30
Up to 4 hrs				£3.80	£4.20	
Up to 6 hrs				£4.70	£5.10	
Over 6 hours				£5.70	£6.10	
Permits Mon – Sun (7 days) Non-transferable			Annual	£857.00	£857.00	

CAR PARK	TYPE OF PARKING		PERIOD	CHARGES	
	Current Charging Period	New Charging Period		April 2021	New Charges introduced April 2022
			3 months	£256.00	£256.00
			1 month	£86.00	£86.00
	Permits Mon-Fri (5 day) Non-transferable		Annual	£715.00	£715.00
			3 months	£213.00	£213.00
			1 month	£72.00	£72.00

Hales Meadow Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sun 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sun 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.90	£2.30
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.50	£3.90
			Up to 6 hrs	£4.20	£4.60
			Over 6 hours	£4.70	£5.10
	Permits Mon – Sun (7 days) Non-transferable		Annual	£684.00	£684.00
			3 months	£209.00	£209.00
			1 month	£67.00	£67.00
	Permits Mon-Fri (5 day) Non-transferable		Annual	£572.00	£572.00
			3 months	£173.00	£173.00
			1 month	£57.00	£57.00
	Market trader Permits		Annual	£85.00	£85.00
Rye Farm Abingdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sun 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sun 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.90	£2.30
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.50	£3.90
			Up to 6 hrs	£4.20	£4.60
			Over 6 hours	£4.70	£5.10
	Permits Mon – Sun (7 days) Non-transferable		Annual	£684.00	£684.00
			3 months	£209.00	£209.00

CAR PARK	TYPE OF PARKING		PERIOD	CHARGES	
	Current Charging Period	New Charging Period		April 2021	New Charges introduced April 2022
			1 month	£67.00	£67.00
			Annual	£572.00	£572.00
			3 months	£173.00	£173.00
			1 month	£57.00	£57.00
	Permits Mon-Fri (5 day) Non-transferable				
			Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.70	£2.10
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.70	£4.10
			Up to 6 hrs	£4.70	£5.10
			Over 6 hours	£5.70	£6.10
			Annual	£501.00	£501.00
			3 months	£150.00	£150.00
			1 month	£51.00	£51.00
			Daily (10 min)	£12.00	£12.00
			Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.70	£2.10
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.30	£3.70
			Up to 6 hrs	£3.70	£4.10
			Over 6 hours	£4.20	£4.50
			Annual	£501.00	£501.00
			3 months	£150.00	£150.00
			1 month	£51.00	£51.00
			Annual	£74.00	£74.00
			Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.70	£2.10
			Up to 4 hrs	£3.30	£3.70
			Up to 6 hrs	£3.70	£4.10
			Over 6 hours	£4.20	£4.60
			Annual	£501.00	£501.00
			3 months	£150.00	£150.00
			1 month	£51.00	£51.00
			Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	No charge

CAR PARK	TYPE OF PARKING		PERIOD	CHARGES		
	Current Charging Period	New Charging Period		April 2021	New Charges introduced April 2022	
Faringdon			Up to 3 hrs	£1.50	£1.90	
Gloucester St Faringdon	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Sat 8.00am to 6:00pm)	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	No charge	£1.50	
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.40	£1.80	
			Up to 4 hrs	£2.80	£3.20	
			Up to 6 hrs	£3.00	£3.40	
			Over 6 hours	£3.20	£3.60	
	Permits Mon – Sun (7 days) Non-transferable			Annual	£356.00	£356.00
				3 months	£108.00	£108.00
				1 month	£36.00	£36.00
	Market trader Permits			Annual	£40.00	£40.00
	Permits – School Term			Daily (20 min)	£12.00	£12.00
	General - On application	Daily rate for Skips		£25.00 plus vat (per space) 2 spaces required as stated in the terms & conditions		
		Wheelie Bins (per space)		Annual	£204.00 plus vat	
Permit replacement			£12.00	£12.00		
Permit Refunds (Admin cost)			£10.00	£10.00		
Excess Charges			Standard	£80.00	£80.00	
			If paid within 14 days	£40.00	£40.00	

Appendix 2 Comparison of car park fees and charges with local suppliers, October 2023

Place	Average Charging periods	up to 1 hour	up to 2 hours	up to 3 hours	up to 4 hours	up to 5 hours	up to 6 hours	Up to 7 hours	up to 8 hours	up to 10 hours	up to 12 hours
South Oxfordshire District Council	8am to 6pm Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm Sunday	Free	1.80	2.40		2.80				6.00	
Train Station, Henley (APCOA on behalf of First Great Western) (discounts apply if pay by 'phone)	All days any time			2.00	3.00		4.00				
Dry Leas (Henley rugby club)	7am-10pm Mon to Sunday										3.50
Mill Meadows (Henley Town Council) Mon-Fri Free after 7:00pm Sat and Sun and BHs	All days Free from 7pm to 9am	1.50/1.80	3.00/3.50		6.00/7.00	Over 4 hrs 8.00/9.00					
Wycombe DC (High Wycombe) Easton Street	7am – 8pm Mon – Sat - Sunday £1.00 all day Free from 8pm to 7am	1.10	2.10	2.60	3.10	3.60	4.10	Over 6 hr 9.10			
Wycombe DC (High Wycombe) Baker St	Car Park Closed										
Wycombe DC (Marlow) Riley Road	7am to 7pm Mon - Sun	90p	1.70	2.60	3.10		4.10				6.60

Woking Borough Council (Victoria Way, Brewery Road & Heathside Crescent)	6am - 6pm Charges on Sunday at reduced rate, 1 hr 1.60, 2 hrs 3.00 over 2 hrs 3.30	1.80	3.50	5.00	6.50		8.00	12.00			15.00 up to 24hr
Aylesbury Vale DC (Friarscroft – outer long stay)	6.30am - 8.30pm Mon – Sat										3.10 Mon – Sat 8am to 9pm 1.60 Sundays & BH
Banbury (Market PI, ultra short stay)	8am - 6pm Mon –sat (Sundays & B/H 1hr – 1.10, over 1 hr 1.60)	1.60 (1.10 up to 30 mins)									
West Oxfordshire DC (Marriotts Walk multi-storey, Witney)	7am – 1am Mon -Sat 9am -1am Sunday	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Levels one to six have a max stay of four hours, Level seven and eight have a maximum stay of nine hours
West Oxfordshire DC (Woodford Way)	All day - Mon -Sun	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	
Cherwell DC (Claremont)	Mon – Sun 8am to 6pm Free after 6pm	1.10 Sundays 1.10	2.20 or Sunday 1.60 over 1hr	3.00							
Cherwell DC (Cattle Market)	8am - 6pm Mon -Sun. Free parking after 6pm Mon - Sun	1.10 Sunday 1.10	2.20 or Sunday 1.60 over 1hr	3.00	3.80						5.00 – Day rate
Newbury Central KFC car park	Mon to Sun. 8am to 6pm	1.50	2.70	3.90	5.20		7.20		8.70		12.00

Waitrose Wallingford	Mon – Fri 8am – 9pm Sat – 8am - 8pm Sun 10am – 4pm	£1.00 £10 spend in Waitrose)	Max Stay 2hrs								
Didcot Gateway	Open 24hrs		2.50	4.50	5.60						7.20 up to 24hrs
Orchard Centre Didcot	Mon – Sat 7am – 7pm Free Parking on Sunday		Free	1.70	2.50	4.80 – Max 5 hrs stay					
Sainsburys Wantage	Mon – Sat 8am – 6pm Free any other time	Free	1.50	2.10	3.70	3.70	4.10				Max 4.50

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Finance – Simon Hewings

Author: Janette Hinton-Smith

Telephone: 07917 088369

Textphone:

E-mail: janette.hinton-smith@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: Chilton

Cabinet member responsible: Cllr Sue Caul (Affordable Housing, Infrastructure, Development and Governance)

E-mail: sue.caul@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: CABINET

Date: 1 December 2023

Section 106 (S106) Request – Chilton Parish Council – Play area / Recreation ground improvements

Recommendations

Cabinet:

That Cabinet recommends to Council to create a budget for £116,000 towards new play area equipment and recreation ground improvement at Chilton parish village play area project, to be funded by the S106 contributions set out in this report.

Council:

- (a) To delegate authority to the Head of Finance to approve the award to Chilton Parish Council of £116,000 in S106 funding towards the play area / recreation ground improvement project at Chilton parish active play area subject to and in accordance with the funding agreement
- (b) To agree and enter into a funding agreement with Chilton Parish Council regarding the terms of use of the S106 funding; and to protect the interests of Vale of White Horse District Council as the provider of the funding by undertaking legal and financial due diligence including being satisfied that the funding is lawful and compliant with subsidy control provision.

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a request from Chilton Parish Council, to release funds of £116,295.07 from two S106 contributions towards play area / recreation ground improvement project at Chilton village active play area.
2. Chilton active play area is located adjacent to the village hall off Church Hill, Chilton, Oxon, OX11 0SH. This is a Chilton Parish Council owned and managed facility and once the new equipment is installed it will be the responsibility of the parish council to maintain.
3. The figures and relevant dates for the amount requested of **£116,295.07** are set out in the summary table below. In accordance with the Constitution of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council – 6 October 2023 Financial procedure rules (para 75 (c) (Appendix Two)) for agreements of greater than £100,000 budgets, where section 106 or CIL agreements have not provided clear and unambiguous details on how the receipts are raised, must be approved by Council.

Agreement Ref.	Contribution towards (extracts from S106 agreement)	Amount in Agreement	Contributions Received (incl indexation)	Amount requested	Previously Allocated	Projected Balance
09V19	Equipped Activity Area Contribution to be used for the provision of an Equipped Activity Area for children aged 11 to 18	£155,000	£208,404.58 received on 24.11.14, spend within 10 years	£72,644.58	£135,760	£0
16V80	Recreation Ground Contribution - Towards improving the recreation ground facilities in the Parish	£39,855	£43,650.49 received on 06.08.19, spend within 10 years	£43,650.49	£0	£0

4. The overall project cost will be £128,771.00 the shortfall of £12,475.93 will be met by Chilton Parish Council as they have received a £5,000 grant from Magnox, £3,000 from Oxfordshire County Council Councillor Priority Fund and £4,475.93 will come from the parish council own reserves.

Corporate Objectives

5. Building healthy communities, working in partnership and working in an open and inclusive way

Background

6. The project will enhance, refresh, improve and/or replace aging play equipment and outdoor facilities at the play area in Chilton village (known as the active play area). The new equipment and facilities will allow children from a range of ages, backgrounds, interests and disabilities to be able to play together. Two new accessible items of play equipment are a trampoline and roundabout.

There will be new flooring/safety matting throughout, and new path surfaces (replacing the grass) to make it accessible to users who may use a wheelchair or wheeled access, or maybe find grass more difficult to traverse. The current play area fence will stay in situ.

The current team tarmac area, where children can play as a larger team, will remain, and a second 'end' will be added (currently only one brick wall). The introduction of two 'ends' (one of them interactive) allows for a more balanced team game and symmetrical play area. One basketball net is staying, and the other removed as it is at a 90 degree angle to the tarmac area. The interactive equipment uses low power and energy efficient LEDs.

The introduction of a lined 'track' also means that other activities can take place at the same time and gives the area a different use.

In 2021 Chilton Parish Council established a Play Area working Committee. It comprised two current parish council members and four Chilton village parents. Eleven 'Expression of Interest' were sent to prospective parties, with the remit of being able to help drive, consult, design, project manage and install the play equipment for an inclusive cost. Three companies responded and after a criteria assessment and scoring methodology Jupiter Play was awarded the contract in early 2022.

In the summer 2022 two in person (at two different sites) and one online consultation events were organised by the play area working committee with Jupiter Play. This was to allow parents and children to express their needs and wants and for the committee and Jupiter to take feedback. These consultations were promoted via social media Facebook, Chilton Chronicle (every Chilton home receives), within the local school, and to users of the village hall such as Brownies/Scouts. Jupiter Play provided boards that included elements of play e.g. traversing, climbing, swing, hang, etc, with accompanying examples. These boards helped spark discussion about what children liked best. The results of the consultation survey, led to three designs being put forward. This did not include for a fully enclosed MUGA as the cost is high and they are not welcoming to girls as they find the enclosed spaces intimidating. However, Jupiter Play produced a fourth options of a fully enclosed MUGA but it would mean that other new equipment and refurbishments would not be possible.

A second consultation took place in January 2023 again with Jupiter Play present; two in person at two different sites and online to look at four final designs (provided on boards), asking users to vote for their favourite, to provide feedback and say if anything was drastically not liked. Verbal feedback received on the day said how good the designs were and how it had really felt like a community involved project. In total approximately 120 responses were received. Option two received the most votes and with a few tweaks the final design has been achieved.

The redesign of both areas will increase its use. The reconditioned tarmac will level out the undulations, meaning that wheeled toy (roller skates, scooters, bikes) play, team games and interactive play, will be usable by those of all ages and abilities as well. By having an additional 'end' it will make team games even. The new 'end' is interactive, it will bring new challenges and a more modern feel, as children will be able to accurately get real time feedback (from hitting targets) as well as a modern twist with the targets illuminating. There will be the addition of different markings to the tarmac area.

The inclusion of wheelchair access to the play area and accessible items of play will give those who are less able bodied, the ability to play with their friends and siblings and be included. With the addition of seating, which was asked for by parents, carers and grandparents, they will be able to stay longer whilst looking after children.

7. Planning permission has been granted under planning application P23/V1203/FUL.

Options

8. Chilton Parish Council are seeking S106 funds to use towards the refurbishment / update of the Chilton active play area located at the recreation ground. Facilities will be provided that cover a wide range of ages and abilities as well as a picnic table making it a destination play area and recreation ground. The Infrastructure Implementation and Funding Team have not received any competing applications for these funds. If the Council were to consider not awarding the requested S106 funds or to only award the use of one of the S106 contributions, then the project could not be delivered or would be significantly delayed whilst alternative funds is sought.

Financial Implications

9. The overall project cost will be £128,771.00 the shortfall of £12,475.93 will be met by Chilton Parish Council as they have received a £5,000 grant from Magnox, £3,000 from Oxfordshire County Council Councillor Priority Fund and £4,475.93 will come from the parish council own reserves.

10. No further funding is available from the district council towards this project, and it is under no obligation to meet any additional costs.

Legal Implications

11. Legal responded to say that the proposed use for the S106 contributions complies with the obligations in the S106 agreements.

12. As the funding requested is above £100,000, under the terms of the Constitution of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council – 6 October 2023 Financial procedure rules (para 75 (c) (Appendix Two)) approval is required by full council. It is recommended that Council delegate authority to the Head of Finance to award the funding in accordance with the S106 agreement.

13. A legal funding agreement will be secured with Chilton Parish Council before the S106 funds are transferred, up to a maximum amount of £116,295.07. This will reduce risks to the Council regarding inappropriate use of the funds.

14. The award of S106 funds is not subject to the Subsidy Control rules as it is being passed to a public body for use in the exercise of their public functions as reflected in clause 7(a) of the Subsidy Control bill.

15. Chilton Parish Council has provided the conveyance document of 13 August 1973 showing that the land was purchased by Chilton Parish Council for £1,800.

Climate and ecological impact implications

16. As part of Chilton Parish Council's scoring matrix sustainability was one of the elements. Jupiter Play scored higher on their sustainability, than the other companies. Jupiter Play only work with ISO 14001 certified companies meaning all of their materials are sustainably sourced and the picnic table utilises recyclable material in its construction. The major element to the MUGA is the surfacing which is pre existing mitigating the environmental impact of laying a new foundation. The removed play equipment that is fit for purpose will be refurbished and installed at the Chilton Community play area.
17. Chilton Parish Council has decided not to add any more trees around the playing fields or play apparatus, as this would restrict more 'open play' of ball games or 'running around' as children.
18. The above has been shared with the Climate Action team who replied to say it was helpful that these implications have been taken into account during the project planning phase.

Procurement implications

19. This is a Council decision to award S106 funding and will not involve the Council in any decision to buy goods, services or works.

Equalities implications

20. The Councils Equality and Inclusivity officer commented that this is a well thought out project where people who will use the space have been consulted. Refreshing to see accessible play equipment and a picnic table with an extended end overhang for those in a wheelchair to be able to share the table space.
21. Chilton Parish Council have taken on board the comments from Jupiter Play not to have a full enclosed MUGA as these can be unwelcoming to girls as they find the enclosed spaces intimidating. This is reiterated in the 'Make Space for Girls' research report of 2023.

Risks

22. The project is only part funded by S106 contributions, totalling £116,295.07. The remaining funds required are £12,475.93 and Chilton Parish Council have shown where this funding has been obtained from.

Other Implications

23. No further impacts or implications identified.

Conclusion

24. The redesign of both areas will increase its use and bring added benefit with up to date play equipment, the inclusion of wheelchair access paths and accessible items of play contributing to an inclusive theme and the addition of seating makes it a more pleasant experience. The reconditioned tarmac area offers space for wheeled toys and the new interactive end wall is very modern with illuminating target.

25. The proposed project conforms to the spending parameters of the S106 agreements and is a suitable use of the funds.
26. The risks identified have been shown to be manageable within reasonable tolerances, and through appropriate funding mechanisms.
27. The alternative options of either not funding or only part funding the project have been discounted.
28. It is therefore recommended that the S106 funds identified be awarded subject to the necessary funding agreement.

Background Papers

- None

Financial contributions:

Development: Land to the South of Chilton Field, Avon Road, Chilton

Planning Ref: P05/V1086/O

S106 Ref: 09V19

Date of agreement: 13 November 2009

Obligation: "Equipped Activity Area Contribution" means the sum of one hundred and fifty five thousand pounds (£155,000) to be used for the provision of an Equipped Activity Area in the event that the Owner does not install such equipment and more particularly described in clause 4 of the Second Schedule (see below).

Expiry Date: 24 November 2024

Planning Decision: Delegated decision

Development: Land to north of Manor Close, Chilton OX11 0SS

Planning Ref: P16/V1243/O

S106 Ref: 16V80

Date of agreement: 21 October 2016

Obligation: "Recreation Ground Contribution" means the sum of thirty nine thousand eight hundred and fifty five pounds (£39,855) to be paid to the District Council to be used towards improving the recreation ground facilities within the Parish

Expiry Date: 6 August 2029

Planning Decision: Committee decision

Planning Ref: P05/V1086/O - S106 Ref: 09V19 - Clause 4 of Second Schedule:

4.0 EQUIPPED ACTIVITY AREA

- 4.1 Subject to paragraph 4.2 of this Schedule not to cause or permit the Commencement of Development until a scheme to provide the Equipped Activity Area has been agreed with the Council such agreement not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed and for the avoidance of doubt the Owner shall not be obliged under this Agreement to supply equipment, materials and/or labour amounting to more than the total value of one hundred and fifty five thousand pounds (£155,000) in relation to the Equipped Activity Area .
- 4.2 In the event that it is agreed by the Council in consultation with the Parish and notified in writing to the Owner before the intended date of Commencement of Development (as notified to the Council in accordance with clause 10.2 of the main body of this Agreement) that the Equipped Activity Area is to be provided by the Parish the Owner shall not cause or permit the Occupation of the one hundredth (100th) Dwelling for General Market Housing until the Equipped Activity Area Contribution has been paid to the Council and upon the said notification in writing being sent to the Owner, paragraphs 4.1 and 4.3 of this Schedule shall cease to exist and shall be of no further effect
- 4.3 In default of written notification to the Owner of the Parish Council's decision by the deadline referred to in paragraph 4.2 above or in the event that it is agreed by the Council in consultation with the Parish that the Equipped Activity Area is to be provided and installed by the Owner and the Owner is notified of the same in writing the Owner shall not cause or permit the Occupation of the one hundredth (100th) Dwelling for General Market Housing until the Equipped Activity Area is equipped as agreed in writing with the Council
- 4.4 Not to cause or permit the Occupation of the one hundred and fiftieth (150th) Dwelling for General Market Housing until the Equipped Activity Area Commuted Sum has been paid to the Council

Constitution October 2023

Section 106 and community infrastructure levy (CIL) income and related expenditure

Page 224-225 Constitution of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council – 6 October 2023 Financial procedure rules

73. The head of planning shall be responsible for negotiating and gaining the relevant approval for section 106 agreements. Receipt of a section 106 or CIL income does not confer the power to spend. Appropriate budgets must be created in accordance with the financial procedure rules to give heads of service authority to incur expenditure on schemes funded from section 106 or CIL income. Part 2 of this constitution sets out delegations to the heads of service relating to the community infrastructure levy.

74. For section 106 or CIL agreements that provide clear and unambiguous details on how the receipts raised must be used, where that agreement has been approved by the Planning Committee and over which further discretion cannot be applied then the head of finance can approve the creation of the relevant revenue or capital budget.

75. For all other section 106 and CIL agreements where contributions are received by the council a budget for the spending of the receipt must be created as follows:

- (a) For agreements of up to £20,000 budgets can be approved by the head of finance.
- (b) For agreements greater than £20,000 up to £100,000 budgets can be approved by the relevant Cabinet member in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance.
- (c) For agreements of greater than £100,000 budgets must be approved by Council.

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Finance

Author: Vicky Johnson

Telephone: 01235 422481

Textphone: 18001 01235 422481

E-mail: Vicky.johnson@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Andrew Crawford

Tel: 01235 772134

E-mail: andy.crawford@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: CABINET on 1 December 2023

To: COUNCIL on 13 December 2023

Council tax base 2024/25

Recommendations

That Cabinet recommends Council to:

- (a) Approve the report of the head of finance for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2024/25.
- (b) Agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as its council tax base for the year 2024/25 be 58,103.8.
- (c) Agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as the council tax base for the year 2024/25 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in **Appendix A** of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 1 December 2023.

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to recommend the council tax base for 2024/25 to Council for approval.

Corporate Objectives

2. The calculation of the tax base is a legal requirement and an essential part of the tax setting process which helps to achieve the council's corporate objectives.

Background

3. Before the council tax can be set by the council, a calculation has to be made of the council tax base, which is an estimate of the taxable resources for the district as a whole and for each parish area.
4. The council tax base for the district has to be notified to Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley by 31 January 2024. Each parish and town council is also notified of the figure for its area.
5. The legislation requires that the council tax base is approved by full council or a non-executive body with delegated powers. No such delegation exists, so cabinet is therefore asked to recommend to council the schedule set out in **Appendix A** as the council tax base for the district as a whole and for each parish area.

Options - Calculation of the tax base

6. The starting point for the calculation is the total number of dwellings and their council tax band.
7. The council then allows for the following information, for each band:
 - (a) dwellings which will be entirely exempt, so no tax is payable (e.g., those occupied entirely by students)
 - (b) dwellings which will attract a 25 per cent reduction (e.g., those with a single adult occupier)
 - (c) dwellings which will attract a 50 per cent reduction (e.g., those where all the adult residents qualify for a reduction)
 - (d) dwellings which will be treated as being in a lower band because they have been adapted for a severely disabled person. The regulations provide methodology to take account of the reduction available to those in band A dwellings
 - (e) dwellings which will be on the valuation list, but which attract discounts or disablement relief or are exempt, for only part of the year
8. Each band is then converted into "band D equivalents" by applying the factor laid down by legislation. For example, a band A dwelling is equal to $\frac{2}{3}$ of a band D dwelling and is therefore multiplied by $\frac{2}{3}$ to arrive at the band D equivalent figure, whilst a band H dwelling is equal to twice a Band D dwelling and is therefore multiplied by two to arrive at the Band D equivalent figure. All these are then added together to give a total of band D equivalents.
9. A final adjustment is required to allow for non-collection. The council is required to decide what its collection rate is likely to be and apply this to its council tax base. Historically the council has assumed a 98 per cent collection rate, however, it would be more appropriate for this to be set at 98.5 per cent for 2024/25. A bad debt provision of 1.5 per cent is therefore proposed for 2024/25.

Taxbase for 2024/25

10. Based on the assumptions detailed above, the council tax base for 2024/25 is 58,103.8.
11. Similar calculations are required for each parish in order to calculate the proportion of the district's tax base which relates to its area. A schedule of the tax base for each parish is set out in **Appendix A**.
12. To calculate the council tax amounts payable per property band for the council, its council tax requirement (i.e., the amount of council tax to be raised) is divided by the Band D equivalent (tax base). This will be finalised during January and February, culminating in the council tax being set by council in February 2024 (the exact date is subject to the council being notified of the major precepting authorities' council tax requirements).

Financial Implications

13. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2023 showed that the council was able to set a balanced budget for 2023/24, but that there is expected to be a budget gap in future years. However, there is great uncertainty over this caused by a lack of clarity from government.
14. The future funding gap is predicted to increase to over £7.8 million by 2027/28, based on current cautious officer estimates of future funding levels. Whilst it is anticipated that overall funding for the council will remain relatively unchanged in 2024/25, the lack of certainty on future local government funding from 2025/26 onwards means the level of funding, and the resulting estimated funding gap, could be significantly different from current officer estimates in either a positive or negative way. Every financial decision, particularly those involving medium-term funding commitments (i.e. those beyond 2024/25), needs to be cognisant of the potential for significant funding gaps in future years.

Legal Implications

15. These are set out in the body of the report.

Climate and ecological impact implications

16. There are no direct climate and ecological implications arising from this report

Equalities implications

17. The calculation of the tax base is a legal requirement and there are no equalities implications with this process.

Risks

18. The council's methodology for calculating the tax base involves basing the calculation on actual dwellings at a certain point in time, rather than forecasting on potential new

dwellings that may be built in the future. Because of this the risk exposure is considered to be low.

Other Implications

19. n/a

Conclusion

20. As covered above, the calculation of the tax base is a legal requirement and it is asked that Cabinet recommends the council tax base for 2024/25 to Council for approval in accordance with Appendix A.

Background Papers

None

PARISH COUNCIL TAX BASES - 2024-25

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS 2024-25	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS 2023-24	PARISH TAX BASE 2024-25	PARISH TAX BASE 2023-24	% CHANGE ON YEAR
ABINGDON	15,214	15035	12,646.3	12,467.9	1.43%
APPLEFORD	147	146	168.1	163.8	2.63%
APPLETON WITH EATON	405	403	458.2	457.9	0.07%
ARDINGTON AND LOCKINGE	232	228	235.3	229.8	2.39%
ASHBURY	267	259	283.4	274.3	3.32%
BAULKING	44	42	51.8	49.9	3.81%
BESSELSLEIGH	69	66	82.1	78.1	5.12%
BLEWBURY	821	813	748.0	745.0	0.40%
BOURTON	136	138	151.7	151.0	0.46%
BUCKLAND	265	266	337.8	337.3	0.15%
BUSCOT	87	87	86.9	86.0	1.05%
CHARNEY BASSETT	128	127	153.5	153.7	-0.13%
CHILDREY	228	228	244.5	240.6	1.62%
CHILTON	674	673	701.5	692.5	1.30%
COLESHILL	74	74	69.1	68.1	1.47%
COMPTON BEAUCHAMP	31	31	38.2	39.4	-3.05%
CUMNOR	2,856	2833	3,039.2	3,020.3	0.63%
DENCHWORTH	84	84	88.6	88.8	-0.23%
DRAYTON	1,279	1274	1,215.0	1,209.0	0.50%
EAST CHALLOW	541	502	479.0	435.4	10.01%
EAST HANNEY	574	544	619.8	598.7	3.52%
EAST HENDRED	610	607	636.2	630.0	0.98%
EATON HASTINGS	35	35	35.0	34.8	0.57%
FARINGDON	4,083	3935	3,357.4	3,208.8	4.63%
FERNHAM	103	103	124.6	122.9	1.38%
FRILFORD	105	102	149.5	141.6	5.58%
FYFIELD AND TUBNEY	200	201	244.9	247.7	-1.13%
GARFORD	70	70	84.5	83.4	1.32%
GOOSEY	60	57	68.9	66.9	2.99%
GREAT COXWELL	164	164	191.7	195.8	-2.09%
GROVE	3,994	3835	3,380.5	3,249.1	4.04%
HARWELL (*)	1,399	1396	1,358.0	1,347.8	0.76%
WESTERN VALLEY	958	889	792.5	743.6	N/A
HATFORD	39	38	48.9	47.9	2.09%
HINTON WALDRIST	154	153	156.5	157.0	-0.32%
KENNINGTON	1,788	1784	1,736.7	1,725.6	0.64%
KINGSTON BAGPUIZE AND SOUTHM	1,778	1746	1,810.0	1,766.8	2.45%
KINGSTON LISLE	113	112	120.4	117.5	2.47%
LETCOMBE BASSETT	78	79	90.6	93.4	-3.00%
LETCOMBE REGIS	387	386	364.7	362.1	0.72%
LITTLE COXWELL	68	70	81.4	81.6	-0.25%
LITTLEWORTH	98	97	125.8	123.5	1.86%
LONGCOT	241	241	247.2	251.0	-1.51%
LONGWORTH	252	250	291.1	285.8	1.85%
LYFORD	23	23	24.9	25.8	-3.49%
MARCHAM	966	946	955.6	931.4	2.60%
MILTON	777	710	759.0	691.5	9.76%
NORTH HINKSEY	2,659	2599	2,203.5	2,168.7	1.60%
PUSEY	30	30	40.8	40.4	0.99%
RADLEY	1,241	1118	1,131.7	1,002.2	12.92%
ST HELEN WITHOUT	855	856	841.1	834.6	0.78%
SHELLINGFORD	87	87	87.4	84.3	3.68%
SHRIVENHAM	1,554	1468	1,520.9	1,444.1	5.32%
SOUTH HINKSEY	174	173	201.6	199.9	0.85%
SPARSHOLT	140	140	154.2	154.5	-0.19%
STANFORD IN THE VALE	1,153	1109	1,066.9	1,024.2	4.17%
STEVENTON	937	932	894.5	883.0	1.30%
SUNNINGWELL	384	385	449.1	451.8	-0.60%
SUTTON COURTENAY	1,341	1285	1,289.3	1,215.9	6.04%
UFFINGTON	369	365	377.0	370.2	1.84%
UPTON	185	184	225.4	225.8	-0.18%
WANTAGE	6,474	6215	5,487.7	5,281.8	3.90%
WATCHFIELD	1,139	1139	1,039.0	1,035.0	0.39%
WEST CHALLOW	99	99	112.3	111.2	0.99%
WEST HANNEY	274	261	321.0	303.4	5.80%
WEST HENDRED	151	150	171.8	166.4	3.25%
WOOLSTONE	62	62	80.0	78.6	1.78%
WOOTTON	1,198	1199	1,188.3	1,182.4	0.50%
WYTHAM	73	73	85.8	85.7	0.12%
TOTAL	63,278	61,811	58,103.8	56,665.0	
% increase compared to last year	2.4%		2.5%		

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Finance

Author: Trevor Gaffney

Telephone: 01235 422748

Textphone: 18001 01235 422748

E-mail: Trevor.gaffney@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Cllr Andrew Crawford

Tel: 07427 880274

E-mail: andy.crawford@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: CABINET on 1 December 2023

To: COUNCIL on 13 December 2023

Council tax reduction scheme 2024/25

Recommendations

- (a) It is recommended that for the 2024/25 financial year onwards the council continues to adopt the previous 2023/24 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme but with the following amendment:

Where the council has identified that a taxpayer has failed to notify the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) of a relevant change in circumstances, affecting their legacy benefit or Universal credit, then (where necessary) their entitlement to CTR will be stopped, until that notification has taken place and revised DWP benefit entitlement known.

- (b) Cabinet recommends to Council for the above change to be incorporated into its CTR Scheme for the oncoming 2024/25 financial year onwards.

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the council to adopt and implement a modified council tax reduction scheme for the financial years 2024/2025 onwards.

Corporate Objectives

2. The council is required by statute to adopt a scheme to help those on low incomes to meet their council tax liability. In accordance with the strategic objective "running an efficient council" by having a scheme we meet this objective.

Background

3. From April 2013, the national scheme to help people on low incomes pay their Council Tax (Council Tax Benefit), was abolished and a local scheme was introduced called Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme. The Government continued to fund the new scheme, but with a 10 per cent reduction in funding from the previous CTB scheme. In 2013, the council decided to keep the new CTR scheme as close to the old CTB scheme as possible.
4. For the financial year 2014 onwards, the council decided several changes for working age people (the scheme for people of pension age is decided nationally by the Government) would be made, which included, changes surrounding second adult rebate, introduction of a working age CTR cap (91.5 per cent) and CTS banding cap.
5. For the financial year 2023 onwards, the council decided to remove these capping restrictions from 2014 as part of their response to the cost-of-living crisis.
6. Throughout, joint working with the DWP has remained essential in maintaining accurate CTR entitlement when known taxpayer(s) change in circumstances occur.

Proposals for 2023/24 onwards

7. It is proposed to insert a requirement for individuals to demonstrate (where necessary) that they have notified the DWP that they have had a change in their circumstances.
8. The current CTR scheme is designed that any person in receipt of one of the below benefits is deemed as passported.
 - Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Job Seekers Allowance
 - Universal Credit

The requirement is for the person to notify any changes in circumstances to the DWP and not necessarily the council. Therefore, in circumstances where the council has identified undeclared changes, it is unable to currently correct any discrepancy until the individual has notified the DWP any revised UC or legacy benefit entitlement determined. This can lead to lengthy delays and CTR being wrongly claimed. Joint working with the DWP, to investigate cases where changes may not have been brought to their attention, would help minimise risk, however, due to recent changes within the DWP (covered below) has meant that this approach can currently no longer be relied upon. The introduction of this rule will allow the council to require individuals to provide evidence that a change in circumstance has been reported to the DWP and allow the council to stop CTR entitlement (where necessary) until this requirement has been done. This addition to the current CTR Scheme is required to prevent error and ensure CTR is only being awarded where entitled. It will also help reduce fraudulent activity.

9. The CTR scheme was designed that anyone in receipt of a passported benefit (listed above) must notify the DWP (as the central point of contact) of any change in circumstance and they then drive the CTR award based on the outcome from that

change. However, where the council's investigations team has established an undeclared change in circumstance to the DWP, the council is unable to correct or terminate the CTR until the DWP have adjusted their benefit first. This can lead to error, fraud at the taxpayers expense, and highlights why working with the DWP proved essential to conduct joint investigations. Due to recent changes within the DWP means this joint working has now been significantly impacted and is why this proposed CTR change is necessary in order to continue to protect the public purse and minimise fraud.

10. The Council has recently been informed by the DWP that their local offices at Oxford, Reading and Slough are being closed and will remain closed until April 2024 at the very earliest (likely to be much longer) and there is risk that they may not reopen. As such, DWP has notified the council that the former joint working arrangements have ceased. Any reports of fraud, error, and undeclared changes, which are identified by the councils investigation team, are therefore having to be passed to the Gloucester DWP and only the largest value cases are being investigated, meaning lower value overpayments, such as Council Tax reductions, are passed back.
11. The current system was designed to ensure that an individual only notifies one central point, however, if they fail to notify that central point then, with the current wording of the rules, it does leave the councils open to risk, especially with the local DWP offices disbanding. The proposed amendment to the current scheme will remove this risk.

Options

12. Based on the current situation it is recommended that Cabinet should recommend to Council to proceed with the modifications detailed below. Therefore, in view of the foregoing, the scheme that is recommended to Council to adopt for 2024/25 onwards is the 2023/24 scheme but with the following amendment:

To include that, where requested, an individual is required to demonstrate that they have notified the DWP of a change of circumstance which may affect the amount of Council Tax Reduction they are in receipt of. Failure to do so can lead to the council stopping ongoing CTS entitlement.

13. The only other option is to do nothing.

Climate and ecological impact implications

14. None

Financial Implications

15. If the proposal is accepted into the CTR scheme there will be ongoing protection of the public purse. Individuals are currently able to continue receiving Council Tax Reduction when the investigations team has identified undeclared changes to DWP which would affect their benefit entitlement.
16. Since 2023 the councils investigations team has identified 11 cases where we have been unable to progress, due to failure of the DWP to offer a joint investigation. It is estimated that these cases would equate to approximately £25,700 in CTR and/or other discount being incorrectly applied. This demonstrates the exposed risk and the need for the recommended change to the scheme to protect the council for all future years.

17. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For Vale, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to full Council in February 2023 showed that the council was able to set a balanced budget for 2023/24, but that there is expected to be a budget gap in future years. However there is great uncertainty over this caused by a lack of clarity from government.
18. The future funding gap is predicted to increase to over £7.8 million by 2027/28, based on current cautious officer estimates of future funding levels. Whilst it is anticipated that overall funding for the council will remain relatively unchanged in 2024/25, the lack of certainty on future local government funding from 2025/26 onwards means the level of funding, and the resulting estimated funding gap, could be significantly different from current officer estimates in either a positive or negative way. Every financial decision, particularly those involving medium-term funding commitments (i.e. those beyond 2024/25), needs to be cognisant of the potential for significant funding gaps in future years.

Legal Implications

19. The current council tax reduction scheme was adopted in 2023/24. There is a statutory duty to adopt a 2024/25 scheme by 11 March 2024. If this deadline is not adhered to, the council's 2023/24 scheme will automatically be rolled over as a consequence.

Procurement implications

20. Any council decision that involves buying goods, services or works must comply with the Procurement Procedure Rules and the councils' Procurement Strategy.
21. This recommendation does not involve the need for any procurement

Risks

22. There is a risk that the current CTR rules allow an individual to continue claiming CTR, without the council being able to make sure its correct. The current risk is to the public purse due to error and fraud, through undeclared changes in circumstances.
23. Changing a council tax reduction scheme which levels up categories of all claimants without being supported by robust principles and consultation, could be open to legal challenge on equalities grounds. However, to mitigate this, the council has ensured that it has fully complied with the necessary equality requirements.

Other implications

24. As this modification to the current scheme is designed to minimise error and help protect the public funds then no other considerations have been deemed necessary. No Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed change has been conducted, as by its nature, the proposal purely addresses an administration risk which currently exists for undeclared changes.

Conclusion

25. The council must adopt a local council tax reduction scheme for 2024/25 by 11 March 2024 and it is proposed that this be based on a scheme which intends to support all

residents on low incomes with help towards paying their council tax. The proposal in this report as proposed by the Cabinet Member for Finance, is to enhance the current scheme to ensure it helps residents during the cost-of-living crisis; continues to be fair on all residents, protects the vulnerable, and helps minimise error and potentially fraudulent activity.

Background Papers

None