

# Council Agenda



Contact: Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager

Telephone number 01235 422526

Email: [steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:steven.corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk)

Date: 3 October 2023

Website: [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

## Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on Wednesday 11 October 2023 at 7.00 pm  
The Ridgeway, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Arran".

Patrick Arran  
Head of Legal and Democratic

**Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio, email and easy read. For this or any other special requirements (such as access facilities) please contact the officer named on this agenda. Please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.**

# Agenda

## Open to the public including the press

### 1. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

### 2. Minutes

(Pages 8 - 23)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2023.

### 3. Declarations of interest

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.

### 4. 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.

### 5. Public participation

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

### 6. Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

### 7. Electoral Review of Vale of White Horse District Council - submission on council size

(Pages 24 - 49)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic on the Council Size Submission document.

## **8. Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

At the annual meeting Council appointed Councillor Lugova as a substitute member on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Following Councillor Lugova's appointment to the Cabinet, she is no longer permitted to be a member of a scrutiny committee.

Council is therefore invited to make a substitute appointment to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **9. Report of the leader of the council**

To receive the report of the leader of council.

## **10. Questions on notice**

To receive questions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 33.

### **A. Question from Councillor Rayner to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council**

Rural bus services should be the lifeblood of our community. Yet the growing community of Kingston Bagpuize has a completely inadequate bus service to Abingdon, our nearest town. Buses only run every two hours and only before 5.00pm. Public transport is essential for commuters, young people accessing education and training, for socialising in the evenings and supporting the local economy. It is also an equalities issue; older people, those who are unable to drive or afford a car, can struggle to visit the GP, dentists and do their shopping.

This council has previously stated our commitment to public transport and active travel, to reduce air pollution, parking problems and improve health, yet we seem to have limited power to make this a reality.

While this may be the case, could the Leader explain what is being done by other authorities and private bus companies to improve bus services between Kingston Bagpuize and Abingdon? And what more can be done, perhaps with the county council, to help our village secure a bus service that is fit for purpose?

### **B. Question from Councillor Smith to Councillor Coleman, Cabinet member for environmental services and waste**

There is growing concern in my ward about the number of single use disposable vapes that are littering our streets and public spaces. People who want to ensure their used vapes are disposed of safely are not always sure of which bin to use and there is next to no information about returning used vapes to retailers.

What impact has the prevalence of single use vapes had on Vale services, and what is the council already doing to address this?

**C. Question from Councillor de la Harpe to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council**

Given that the Prime Minister has recently made announcements that it is his government's intent to roll back climate emergency initiatives and commitments, thereby making his target of hitting net zero by 2050 even less achievable, can the cabinet member assure residents that we remain committed to our climate emergency goals, explain how we might mitigate this new risk to our plans, and write to the Prime Minister to express our utter disappointment in his actions?

**D. Question from Councillor Edwards to Councillor Pighills, Cabinet member for community health and wellbeing**

Recently the dental practice in Faringdon has closed its doors to all NHS patients. This has caused great concern as it is the only practice in Faringdon and serves the residents of the town and many of the outlying villages in the Western Vale.

Could you clarify what influence the council could have in these circumstances and what if anything we can do to help improve the level of service in Faringdon and the rest of the district?

**E. Question from Councillor Cooke to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council**

Thames Water have now published their latest plans for the proposed mega-reservoir in the Vale. They appear to have ignored the many strong points raised that challenged the proposal and have increased the size of the reservoir from one hundred megatonnes to a hundred and fifty megatonnes of water.

The huge scale, massive disruption and lengthy timelines of the project mean that not a drop of water will be seen from the reservoir in a generation. Solutions that could be put in place rapidly, cheaply, and with minimal disruption, such as the National Water Grid, appear to have been sidelined.

The one positive in it is that they claim to be increasing work on cutting leaks. Thames Water currently loses the equivalent of the entire capacity of Farmoor reservoir every fortnight across their network.

Can the Leader tell us which meetings we will be able to have with Thames Water and what pressure will we be placing on them to listen and respond to our questions and respond to the issues, and whether we are able to speak directly to the new Leader of the Environment Agency to ensure that they are aware of the very strong objections from our residents?

**F. Question from Councillor Katherine Foxhall to Councillor Bethia Thomas, Leader of the council and Cabinet member for climate action and the environment.**

In response to an Environmental Information Request, submitted in my role as Nature Recovery Champion, Thames Water have shared data showing every single one of the sewage treatment works and storm overflows in the Vale (except Botley syphon at zero), has already exceeded the total 2021-2022 discharges. At the Wantage works, which discharges directly into the Letcombe Brook chalk stream north of Grove, we have already seen more than 250 hours released this year, five times the total recorded for the whole of 2022. In Drayton, which discharges into the Ginge Brook chalk stream, there had been 969 hours by 5 August, already nearly double the total for 2022. At Shrivenham, there has been 467 hours of discharge, already four times the entire total for 2022.

Disappointingly, Thames Water have also confirmed that they are only considering Abingdon, Kingston Bagpuize, and Wantage as “high priority” sites in the Vale as defined in the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, which requires improvement to 75% of storm overflows discharging into or near ‘high priority sites’ by 2035. This would leave, for example, the Shrivenham outfall to continue to discharge directly into the Tuckmill Brook, immediately upstream of the Tuckmill Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (which Vale owns and is managed by volunteers) for another decade. It will also provide no protection to the Ginge Brook, which receives horrifying amounts of raw sewage from the Drayton works.

Does the Leader agree that Thames Water’s current performance, its investment strategy, and its long-term commitment to reduce the impact of sewage releases in the Vale are woefully inadequate? And is the council able to do more to ensure that precious local habitats such as Tuckmill Meadows and Ginge Brook, as well as the entire Thames Catchment in the Vale, can receive some protection?

## **11. Motions on notice**

To consider motions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 38.

(1) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Foxhall, seconded by Councillor Crawford:

Council’s Pay Policy Statement approved on 15 February 2023, ensures that all directly employed staff receive at least the Real Living Wage as annually defined by the Living Wage Foundation. The Real Living Wage is currently £10.90 an hour and will be updated on 24 October of this year.

The payment of at least the Real Living Wage to our employees is one way of ensuring that all our suppliers and residents are aware that we recognise the importance of the Real Living Wage in helping to reduce in-work poverty.

However, Council is currently unable to become accredited as a Real Living Wage employer as it does not have a clear commitment, or plan in place, to ensure that all the contracts it awards to third parties require that those companies are committed to paying,

as a minimum, the Real Living Wage.

All our major contracts are joint arrangements between Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils.

Whilst Council recognises that it cannot simply change existing contracts, requiring payment of at least the Real Living Wage is something we are able to address in future procurements and contracts.

To demonstrate its commitment to the Real Living Wage and secure accreditation as a Real Living Wage employer, Council confirms its belief that:

- no Council employee, or employee of its third party contractors, should be employed on less than the Real Living Wage.

Council therefore asks:

- 1 The Chief Executive to continue to engage with Unison, as the Council's recognised trade union, to ensure that this position is maintained going forward in respect of all employees.
- 2 The Chief Executive to prepare a report for Cabinet, outlining the steps that are required for our Council to secure accreditation as a Real Living Wage accredited employer.
- 3 The Chief Executive to include, within this report, proposals to implement a requirement on all future contracted providers to pay at least the Real Living Wage to all their staff throughout the duration of the contract, identifying any likely costs associated with this.
- 4 Cabinet to consider the report when prepared and, should its recommendations be approved by both South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, authorise the Chief Executive to work with colleagues to implement its recommendations as soon as practicable.
- 5 The Chief Executive to bring to the attention of all existing third parties who currently provide services directly on behalf of the Council, our view that all employers should, as a minimum, pay the Real Living Wage to their staff and seek an update on their companies' position in relation to this matter.
- 6 The Chief Executive to update Council on progress towards its Accreditation as a Real Living Wage Employer when the next Annual Pay Policy Statement is brought before it.

(2) Motion to be proposed by Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Cox:

Council notes that:

- A poll from Plan International reveals that over a quarter (28%) of girls aged 14-21 in the UK are struggling to afford period products, and nearly 1-in-5 (19%) report being unable to afford period products at all since the start of 2022.
- An ActionAid 2022 survey showed that of those who have struggled to afford menstrual products in the last six months, 75% said they had prioritised spending money on food, 49% had prioritised gas/electric, and 31% prioritised fuel.

- Women, girls and others who menstruate are at risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) if they do not have access to clean period products.
- There is significant evidence of the widespread adverse impact of periods on attendance in education and at work.
- Vulnerable people, such as asylum seekers, those fleeing domestic abuse and homeless people, can experience additional difficulty accessing sanitary products.

Council resolves to:

1. Work with local charities and community groups with the aim of making period products freely available in the Beacon, Abbey House and other buildings we own or operate, and to provide information at those locations on the options residents have available to them when accessing period products, including sustainable reusable options.
2. Encourage those in control of other public buildings in the district, such as GLL and the County Council, to consider doing the same.
3. Ask the Leader to write to the relevant Minister requesting them to introduce a legal right for people in England to access a choice of free period products, provide public health funding to help upper tier local authorities provide menstrual products in the public facing buildings under their control, and to give further consideration to how free period products can be made available to all those who might face barriers to accessing them.