

# Vale of White Horse District Council

## Strategic Performance Report

Quarter 1 2021/22

August 2021

Draft

## BACKGROUND

1. The Council monitors performance and progress towards achieving the aims and priorities set out in the [Corporate Plan](#).
2. This report provides a strategic overview of performance for Q1 (1 April to 30 June 2021) focusing on the activity to deliver the corporate priorities in the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020-24.
3. In addition to providing a performance update and assurance against the delivery of the Council's six strategic themes in the Corporate Plan, this report will also provide any strategic context relevant to the Council's operations and given the significant impact of Covid-19 on communities, services, and staff, the report will include a section on Covid-19 response and recovery.
4. This report is the first iteration, and it is expected that it will evolve in line with the new approach to Performance Management being embedded in the Council as well as from feedback from senior officers and Members.

Draft

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to have far-reaching implications for the Council and our communities, during Quarter 1 – 01 April to 30 June 2021. Although the pandemic has created an unprecedented challenge for the Council, we have responded to the needs of our communities, whilst successfully starting to deliver on our commitments within the Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan – a forward-looking plan which is the start of a new direction to 2024.

This Quarter included significant easing of restrictions as part of the Government's roadmap steps 2 and 3, increasing many residents' social freedoms. However, those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, or those who feel the level of risk is too high, have not been able to access these new social freedoms, which may create the risk of social isolation for some residents, with consequences for both mental and physical health. This Quarter has also seen the continuation of the biggest NHS vaccination programme in health service history, with half of adults over 30 having been vaccinated against Covid-19 by 27 June 2021, the impact of the pandemic on resident wellbeing remains a focus for the Council in Quarter 2 and beyond.

The national reopening of sports facilities, retail and hospitality sectors and cultural centres from 26 June and the reopening of the Beacon in Quarter 2 (formally used as a Covid-19 test centre), and potential income generation opportunities from projects to be delivered later in the Corporate Plan – such as the Strategic Property Review are both important aspects to building financial resilience. In addition, this Quarter the Council has responded to opportunities to influence HM Government for an improved financial settlement for councils, to ensure long term financial and service sustainability. We have submitted consultation responses on the future of the New Homes Bonus (which included proposals on a new funding formula), the outcome of which will be monitored over the upcoming Quarter.

## THEME 2: TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

**Strategic Lead – Suzanne Malcolm – Deputy Chief Executive – Place**

We will:

- do everything we can to help tackle the Climate Emergency
- reduce council emissions by 75% by 2025
- become a carbon neutral council by 2030
- reduce all emissions across the Vale District by 75% by 2030
- aspire to be a carbon neutral Vale district by 2045.

We will do this with:

- a Climate Emergency programme, focussed on what the council has control over, working towards our own targets for our own buildings, vehicles, leisure and arts centres
- a Climate Emergency programme focussed on encouraging the wider district community to reduce its carbon footprint in order to meet the Climate Emergency targets
- a programme around exercising our influence with partners on wider policy, working with neighbouring authorities, lobbying Government, and identifying environmental policy gaps.

### **Key Activities in Q1:**

Working to reduce carbon emissions from our own operations including our buildings is an important part of our work tackling the climate emergency. During Quarter 1 the Vale secured £361,000 of external funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to fully refurbish the heating system at Faringdon Leisure Centre with the installation of a low carbon, renewable energy system. A Project Manager has been appointed to coordinate the delivery of these improvements and the initial stages of the tendering process are underway. The works are on track for completion in 2022.



The design process for the new Council shared office is also well underway, with the minimisation of carbon emissions a key part of the brief. The building is being designed to achieve 'BREEAM excellent' accreditation and deliver a strong performance in terms of carbon emissions- 40% lower than those stipulated in the 2013 building regulations. Furthermore, provision has been made so that the embedded carbon in the building fabric as well as emissions from day-to-day operations will be calculated to facilitate offsetting.

With the aim of increasing tree cover and improving biodiversity in the district, development of the policy for planting trees on Council land is underway. Sites are currently being explored by the Property team drawing on insights from the Strategic Property Review.

As part of our work to encourage the wider district community to reduce their carbon footprint, the climate action pages of the council website have been revamped and now include up to date information on how residents can play their part, including in cutting carbon emissions from their home.

The Council has also joined the Oxfordshire Greentech network. The network can provide be valuable resource for businesses as they seek to reduce their carbon footprint.

The Air Quality Annual Status Report to Defra was submitted on 30 June 2021. To achieve our aim of improving how we measure air quality, Environmental Protection are working to determine where a Particulate Matter (PM) monitor would best be located. Vale has £16,500 in capital funding available for this project. The Government's forthcoming 'Environment Bill may well introduce a requirement to monitor PMs and include specific requirements around the specification and location of equipment and the Council is acting with this in mind.

Throughout Quarter 1, the Climate Action Team have worked with colleagues across council departments to ensure that our commitments on the climate emergency are reflected in the work we do. The team have reviewed plans, provided insight and expertise, and advised colleagues on how projects can be made as climate friendly as possible, with all formal reports now having a "climate implications" section. This engagement with teams across the council has contributed



**£361,000**

**EXTERNAL FUNDING  
SECURED TO  
REFURBISH HEATING  
SYSTEM AT FARINGDON  
LEISURE CENTRE**

to 'tackling the climate emergency' being such an important factor across several themes in this report. It also reflects the fact that action on climate change must be wide ranging if we are to meet the scope of our ambition in this area.

The council is moving forward in the development of the Climate Action Plan and will be co-creating the plan with service areas to ensure the Climate Emergency is fully embedded into all service plans.

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## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
PROGRAMME 1	<b>A climate emergency programme, focussed on what the council has control over, working towards our own targets for our own buildings, vehicles, leisure and arts centres</b>	A narrative summary comprised of all new activity to reduce the carbon footprint of all Council assets on a quarterly basis		Harry Barrington-Mountford	<p>The new shared office – located in South Oxfordshire – is being designed to both achieve BREEAM (the world’s leading sustainability assessment method for master planning buildings) excellent accreditation and a greater than 40% reduction in carbon reductions from those contained within the 2013 building regulations. The embedded carbon in the building fabric and emissions from day-to-day operations will be calculated to facilitate offsetting as part of a wider corporate approach to climate change.</p> <p>The Vale has also successfully secured £361k of external funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for the installation of low carbon and renewable energy at Faringdon Leisure Centre. This will involve the full refurbishment of the heating system on both the wet and dry sides of the centre. A Project Manager has been appointed to coordinate the delivery of these improvements and the initial stages of the tendering process are already underway. The works are due for completion in 2022.</p>
TCE1.1	Develop a Climate Emergency Strategy for the Council, setting out how we will reach Zero Carbon for all Vale assets by 2030. Identify energy saving opportunities in council-owned buildings and fleets	A narrative report of activity underway to design the plan to achieve a zero-carbon position for all Vale assets by 2030.	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	<p>A Climate Action Plan for the Vale is being developed. A tool (GlidePath) to measure the reduction in carbon emissions has also been implemented.</p> <p>The consideration of further opportunities to identify energy saving opportunities in council-owned buildings will be based on the recommendations arising from the Strategic Property Review.</p>
TCE1.2	Complete the CEAC Year One Climate Action Plan and plan for future years	Narrative report on progress	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	A Climate Action Plan is being developed for the Vale.

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Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
TCE1.3	Include in Councils Open Space Strategy opportunities to increase biodiversity, increase tree cover, and (other things we want to do on Council's open spaces)	Narrative report on specific opportunities which have arisen for the council to improve open spaces. Also include any additional policy developments.	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	A policy for the planting of trees on Council land is currently being developed. Sites are currently being explored by the Property team (based on the findings of the Strategic Property Review).
PROGRAMME 2	<b>A climate emergency programme focussed on encouraging the wider district community to reduce its carbon footprint in order to meet the Climate Emergency targets</b>	A narrative update of the work of the comms team in promoting measures/initiatives which will help the community to reduce its carbon footprint.		Harry Barrington-Mountford	The Vale website has been refreshed to contain advice on how residents can reduce their carbon footprint ( <a href="#">Action on Climate and Nature</a> ). Additional information on how to decrease emissions from domestic properties has also been made available.  The Council has joined the Greentech network. This helps support businesses in lessening their impact upon the environment.
TCE2.1	Complete those tasks in Year one Climate Action Plan that have to do with reducing carbon in the wider district	Narrative report on progress	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	A Climate Action Plan for the Vale is being developed. The focus this quarter has, nevertheless, been on work to reduce the carbon footprint of the council's own assets – as this is within our direct control – rather than the wider district.
TCE2.2	Introduce policies for zero carbon construction requirements	Narrative update on progress toward design guide implementation, transitioning into review of relevant information/developments in this area	Cllr Catherine Webber	Adrian Duffield	A Joint Design Guide (JDG) Supplementary Planning Document is currently being produced. This will contain guidance on zero carbon in construction. The JDG is due for internal consultation in August and external consultation in October. The final draft is then scheduled to be ready in December with it being adopted in February 2022.

## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
TCE2.3	Introduce sustainable growth and environmental policies to our Local Plan	Narrative update on the progress towards development of new local plan, specifically referring to details in TCE2.3/4	Cllr Catherine Webber	Adrian Duffield	Annual Target - No response submitted Q1 2021/22
TCE2.4	Ensure our Local Plan contains policies to make new buildings carbon zero to build and to live/work in	Narrative update on the progress towards development of new local plan, specifically referring to details in TCE2.3/4	Cllr Catherine Webber	Adrian Duffield	Annual Target - No response submitted Q1 2021/22
TCE2.5	Develop a year two plan with CEAC for meeting our Climate emergency goals	High level narrative on progress towards approval of two-year plan	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	The Climate Action Plan for the Vale is being developed this will set out actions towards the climate emergency until 2024.
TCE2.6	Improve how we measure air quality. Explore particulate measurement in our sensitive areas. Explore ways to publish AQ measurements in live time, so people can make decisions on whether it's healthy outside for them today	Narrative containing updates/changes to AQ monitoring techniques, an update on work with partners to monitor AQ and details of published AQ measures	Cllr Catherine Webber	Liz Hayden	<p>The Vale has £16,500 one-off capital funding available for 2021/22. The Environmental Protection team are, therefore, considering where a particulate matter (PM) monitor could be installed that could provide base line data.</p> <p>HM Government may also introduce a requirement to monitor PM as part of the measures contained within their Environment Bill. If this occurs, we anticipate that Defra may offer some form of grant funding to local authorities for the purchase of additional PM monitors and equipment. They would also be expected to provide technical guidance relating to monitoring locations, equipment sensitivity etc.</p>

## Performance measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
TCE2.7	Update the Air Quality Action Plans for our Air Quality Management Areas	Until funding confirmed for development of new AQAP's, narrative update on any significant deviation from last relevant AQAP. Once funding confirmed, this can report on the development of the new AQAP.	Cllr Catherine Webber	Liz Hayden	<p>The Air Quality Annual Status Reports have been submitted to Defra. These were due on 30 June 2021.</p> <p>A By the end of August internal processes will commence to seek funding for the development of new Air Quality Action Plans.</p>
TCE2.8	Explore setting up a Habitat Bank to deliver biodiversity offsetting requirements and facilitate tree planting	Narrative update as to progress of potential pilot and other relevant initiatives	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	<p>South and Vale in partnership with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire &amp; Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and Finance Earth are attempting to set up a Habitat Banking Pilot Scheme. To further this work, the Councils have supported an application to Defra's Natural Environment Readiness Fund for the establishment of two habitat restoration projects (one in each district). We are currently awaiting the outcome of this bid.</p>
PROGRAMME 3	<b>A programme around exercising our influence with partners on wider policy, working with neighbouring authorities, lobbying Government and identifying environmental policy gaps</b>	General Narrative update		Harry Barrington-Mountford	<p>Successful Town and Parish Forums focusing on climate action took place during Q1 2021/22. These events were well attended and several key themes relating to the both the climate emergency and Climate Action Plan were discussed.</p>

## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
TCE3.1	Complete the CEAC Year One Action Plan and plan for future years	Narrative report on progress	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	A Climate Action Plan for the Vale is being developed. Alongside the continued delivery of actions from the CEAC year one work programme.
TCE3.2	Work with partners to define a waste reduction scheme: including ways to reduce bulky waste headed to landfill and reduce recycling contamination	Narrative report to outline steps to influence partners and our actions to reduce overall waste	Cllr Catherine Webber	Liz Hayden	<p>The Vale continues to work with Biffa to consistently send good quality recycling to the sorting depot. Contamination rates are approximately 9 per cent which is low when compared to other local authorities.</p> <p>In order to further reduce overall waste, we have launched a new webpage “reducing your waste and increasing your reuse” – <a href="https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/reducing-your-waste-increasing-your-reuse/">https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/reducing-your-waste-increasing-your-reuse/</a></p> <p>This outlines some of the actions that residents can take to reduce consumption and increase recycling.</p> <p>While bulky waste levels are currently less than 5 per cent, the Council continues to collaborate with partners to further reduce the amount heading for landfill.</p>
TCE3.3	Develop a tree-planting strategy and work with partners to plant more trees across the district	Narrative update to include development of the tree policy and subsequent activity	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	A Tree policy is currently being developed.

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TCE3.4	Develop a Biodiversity Net Gain Targeting Strategy and contribute to a Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire	Narrative update on related work, including but not limited to the work to support the Oxfordshire Plan.	Cllr Catherine Webber	Adrian Duffield	No progress reported Q1 2021/22
TCE3.5	Work with partners to provide electric charging points in Vale car parks and at our buildings, and increase charging infrastructure across Oxfordshire	<p>A narrative update to include work to promote and develop EV infrastructure across the district.</p> <p>Quantitative element - breakdown of existing/planned EV charging points</p>	Cllr Catherine Webber	Liz Hayden	<p>The EV 'Park and Charge' project is being managed by Technical Services. Following the completion of due diligence on phase one, the next stage is to meet the electricity supplier – when appointed by Zeta/EZ – to discuss and agree the layout and design of bays. The aim is to complete the installation of EV charge points by March 2022.</p> <p>e.</p>
TCE3.6	Take an active role in the Oxford-Cambridge arc to influence the inclusion of sustainable growth and environmental policies	A narrative update on the work of the Oxford-Cambridge arc and our influencing activity	Cllr Catherine Webber	Adrian Duffield	<p>As part of the work being undertaken to develop the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, officers are influencing the development of the Arc Spatial Framework. In addition, they have also attended several meetings (e.g. the Arc Collaboration Forum early-stage workshop) that will help to influence and shape the future development of the arc.</p> <p>Officers have also, in collaboration with their colleagues at Oxfordshire County Council, succeeded in changing the parameters of England's Economic Heartland's Oxford-Milton Keynes transport study. It will now cover a new wider area which will include Science Vale.</p> <p>Lead members of the Council are also engaging with the Oxford to Cambridge Arc through a variety of channels (e.g., the Arc Leaders Group). Furthermore, in April, Vale Cabinet endorsed the Arc Environmental Principles. These set out how the Arc partners will seek to: work towards a target of net zero carbon at an Arc level by 2040; protect, restore, enhance, and create new nature areas and natural capital assets; be an exemplar for environmentally sustainable development; ensure that existing and new communities see real benefits from living in the Arc; and use natural resources wisely.</p>

## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
TCE3.7	Take an active role in the Growth Deal and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 to influence the inclusion of sustainable growth and environmental policies	Narrative report on work to support the Oxfordshire Plan in accordance with TEC3.7	Cllr Catherine Webber	Adrian Duffield	Annual Target - No response submitted Q1 2021/22
TCE3.8	Work with local partners and Government to encourage retrofitting houses with sustainable energy schemes; help residents take advantage of schemes that come along to help with costs	Narrative report on work influencing work, comms activity and direct engagement with residents.	Cllr Catherine Webber	Harry Barrington-Mountford	A joint retrofit task and finish group was set up to review the retrofit landscape across both districts and to make recommendations for a way forward with this work. The group met with key partners to understand their experiences and perspective on retrofit. A report was written, summarising the key points raised during the meetings, as well as recommended ways forward to address the retrofit needs in the districts. Councillors are currently working on a more detailed report that will be shared more widely.