



MORE VIDEOS

At the Heart of the Vale Council Plan 2025-29

Foreword

**by Cllr Bethia Thomas,
Leader of Vale of Horse
District Council**

It is my pleasure to introduce 'At The Heart of the Vale', our new Council Plan setting out our priorities and making communities the focus of all our goals. I give my heartfelt thanks to everyone who gave us feedback during our early engagement process last year. Your input played an important role in shaping our plan.

Our Council Plan looks ahead to the next four years and what we want to achieve. However, it is set within a context of significant change for local government. In December 2024, the Government introduced plans for local government reorganisation and devolution in the English Devolution White Paper. As a result, the future of district councils like Vale of White Horse is uncertain.

Though faced with a period of significant change, our work continues to deliver the vital services our communities depend on. While we wait for further details and timings for reorganisation and devolution, we are united in our mission to achieve certainty and stability for our district as soon as possible, prioritising the needs of the communities we serve.

Climate and nature recovery continue to be at the heart of everything we do, and we are committed to driving progress to achieve our ambitious net zero targets. At the same time, we are prioritising the delivery of the affordable homes people need and the infrastructure to go with them. We are also committed to promoting community resilience and empowerment and we aspire to have healthy and sustainable communities which benefit from inclusive, accessible services and active engagement.

Our financial stability is testament to our prudent financial management over recent years and aligns with our drive for continuous improvement and service innovation. It has become a cliché to talk of the last four years as 'unprecedented times', but it is also true. We have had to confront numerous challenges and change the way we do things to meet the changing needs of our communities.

With local government reorganisation and devolution firmly on the horizon, the years ahead are set to present more challenges - but also opportunities. We will do everything we can to push for a swift and clear way forward in the best interests of our district, while protecting local services.

I trust our Council Plan provides clarity on what we will set out to achieve over the next few years. Our annual Delivery Plan will set out more detail on how we aim to do that within the environment of change.

Our Vision

For Vale of White Horse to be a vibrant and sustainable district where residents, communities, and businesses thrive. Placing climate action and nature recovery at the heart of everything we do, we will support our businesses and communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience. We will focus on delivering the homes people need, prioritising affordability and high-quality, sustainable development, while working with partners to enhance or provide infrastructure which integrates seamlessly with existing communities. In collaboration with key partners, our local services will promote community resilience and public health, champion inclusivity, and deliver value for money. Our district will be a place that people of all ages are proud to live, work, learn, and play in, where visitors are met with a warm welcome.

Strategic Priorities and Objectives

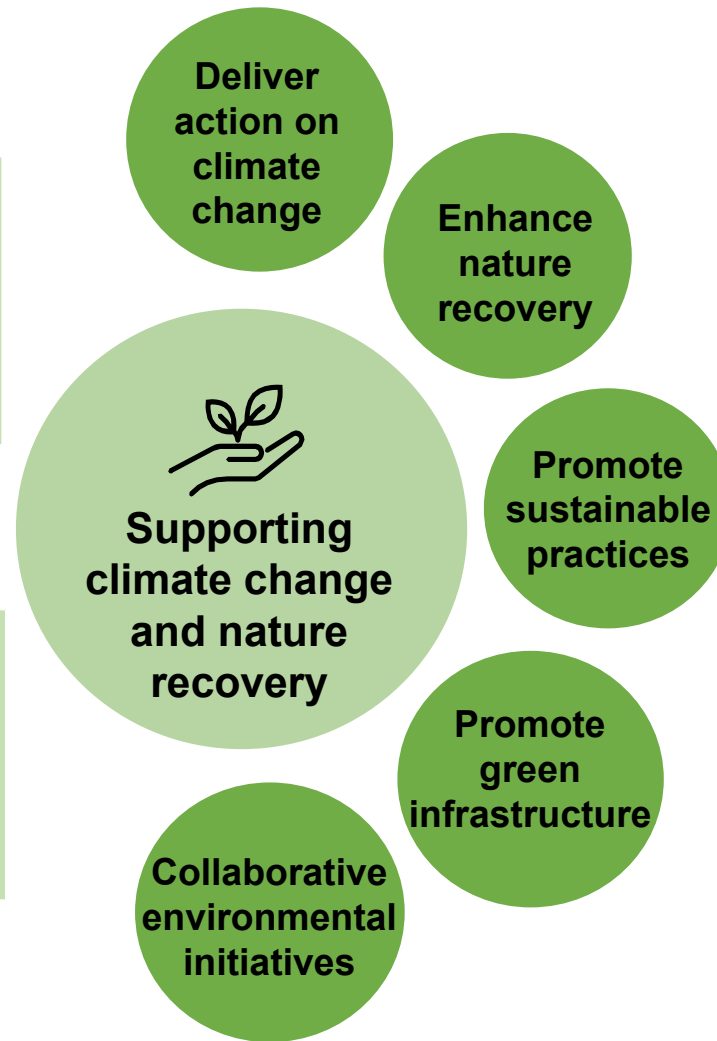


What

Action on climate change and nature recovery: Protecting and enhancing our environment, building resilience and adapting to the effects of climate change, and leading the district to carbon neutrality.

Why

Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, we are committed to taking action on climate change and supporting our residents and businesses to adapt to its impacts, restoring our natural world and fostering resilience within our communities.



How

Deliver action on climate change: Seek to achieve net zero in Council operations by 2030 and a net zero District by 2045. Support our residents and businesses to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Enhance nature recovery: Put nature recovery at the heart of our ground's maintenance operations. Work with partners to restore natural habitats and species populations throughout the Vale of White Horse, focussing our efforts on the priorities identified in the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Integrate natural habitats and balance good growth with net gains for nature.

Promote sustainable practices: Encourage residents and businesses to adopt sustainable practices through education, incentives, and community programmes. Foster community-led sustainability initiatives and environmental stewardship and partnerships with local businesses and organisations to promote sustainable practices.

Promote green infrastructure: Support green infrastructure projects and the protection of green and blue spaces to enhance biodiversity and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Collaborative environmental initiatives: Work with communities and partners to deliver effective nature recovery and biodiversity projects.

What

Promoting healthy, sustainable, and inclusive communities: Building vibrant, inclusive, and resilient communities where all residents can lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Why

The Vale's diverse communities and environment are vital assets. Supporting sustainable economic growth, improving wellbeing, and enhancing the local environment are essential for creating places where everyone can thrive.



How

Enhance public health: Support initiatives that promote physical and mental health.

Strengthen community engagement and inclusion: Work with communities and partners to build strong relationships and promote participation in community life.

Promote sustainable economic development: Support, champion and collaborate with local businesses to enable the creation of high-quality job opportunities, use of new technologies, and promotion of responsible resource-use that align with sustainable practices.

Deliver safe and clean environments: Work with communities to be free from pollution and other environmental hazards and provide healthy living conditions for all residents.

What

Providing the homes and infrastructure people need: Supporting access to high-quality, affordable housing and essential infrastructure that meets local needs and supports well-being.

Why

We face strong housing demand driven by population growth and changing demographics, making it vital to deliver genuinely affordable, high-quality housing. Striving for infrastructure that keeps pace with development is crucial for creating well-connected, climate-resilient communities.



How

Enable community involvement in planning: Engage with residents and support neighbourhood planning to enable developments to meet community needs and preferences.

Support infrastructure integration: Strive for new developments to be accompanied by the timely delivery of essential infrastructure and for existing infrastructure to be enhanced to cope with increased demand as a result of development.

Deliver effective planning and high-quality development: Implement policies that balance growth with environmental protection and sustainability, while promoting high-quality development and construction standards.

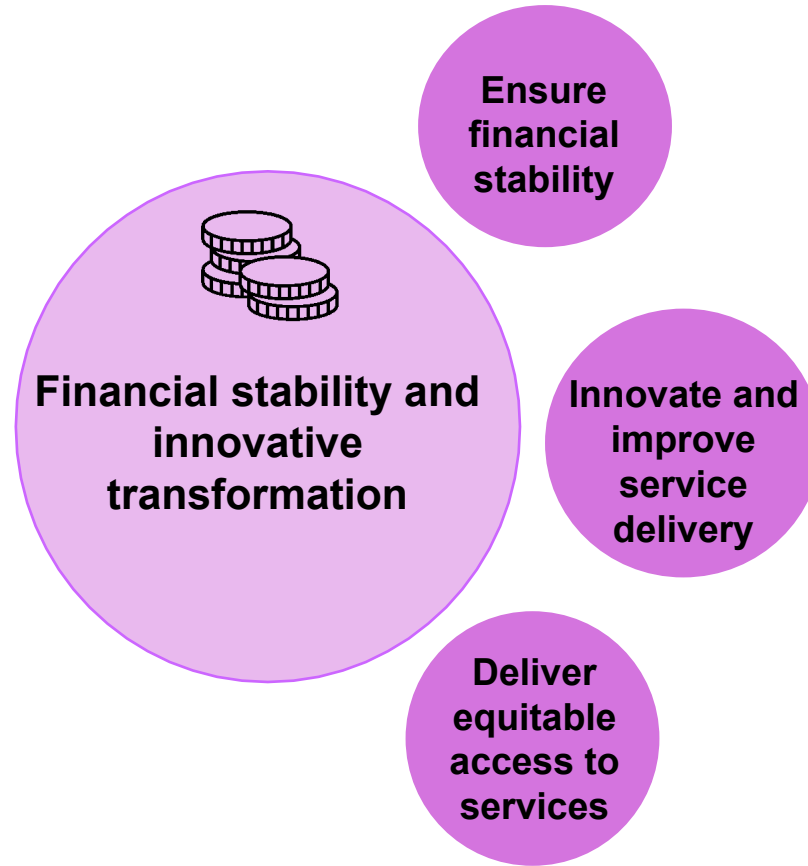
Increase affordable housing supply: Set and achieve appropriate targets for the delivery of genuinely affordable homes across the district.

What

Financial stability and innovative transformation: Continuous innovation and responsible investment to achieve financial stability.

Why

Financial stability and innovative transformation is essential to navigating ongoing financial pressures while ensuring high-quality services.



How

Ensure financial stability: Exercise strong stewardship over public funds to ensure efficient and effective resource use, maximise external funding opportunities from grants and partnerships, and influence central government for an appropriate and longer-term financial settlement for local government.

Innovate and improve service delivery: Drive continuous improvement to ensure efficient, effective delivery of high-quality services, including embracing technology to promote resilience in service delivery.

Deliver equitable access to services: Champion and promote diversity, including identifying and removing barriers to council services to ensure equitable access for all.