

# District Council Report for Faringdon Town Council

Bethia Thomas and David Grant

14 Apr 2021

Firstly, it is with great sadness that we offer our condolences to the family of Roger Cox. He represented the community of Faringdon ably for many years including as leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council and Bethia had the personal pleasure of working with him prior to becoming a councillor. He will be missed by many at the council and in Faringdon.

With local elections coming up at the beginning of May, we're now well into purdah season so we'll keep the report brief this month, but we're sure nobody will mind us offering a quick congratulations to Faringdon Viral Kindness and Flowers for Molly for bringing two High Sheriff awards to Faringdon. The awards are thoroughly deserved for all the volunteers who have kept Faringdon going all year.

Our officers are busy preparing for a smooth election, albeit in more challenging circumstances than usual. To spread voters out, there will be three polling stations in Faringdon this year. We'd like to remind everyone to check their polling cards to make sure they go to the right one.

## Local Issues to Faringdon

- **Polling stations** – To spread voters out in a COVID secure manner there will be three polling stations running in Faringdon this year: Corn Exchange, Sudbury House Hotel & Leisure Centre. Please check your polling card for the right one if you plan to vote in person.
- **Funding for leisure returning to Faringdon** – Consultation has begun on how to spend leisure funding that is in the process of being returned to Faringdon. A survey has been sent to local sports clubs and groups and we are looking forward to reviewing the results, with further consultation with Faringdon Town Council in the near future.
- **Faringdon Leisure Centre Reopening** – We are pleased to confirm that Faringdon Leisure Centre is reopening on 12<sup>th</sup> April. In the first phase everything will be reopening except for the squash courts which will follow at a later date.
- **Bromsgrove Day Centre** – We are glad to be able to help Bromsgrove Day Centre with funds from our Councillor COVID-19 grant. It's particularly important for those who have been shielding to be able to look after their physical and mental health by getting back active. The money will be put towards training and equipment to allow the day centre to get their clients back active with their gentle exercise sessions in a COVID safe way.
- **Folly Park** – We are continuing in partnership between the town council and the Vale to progress all the issues that we are seeing there.

## District Update

- **Support for vulnerable residents** – The South and Vale Community Hub continues to be available to help people access support and essentials during the lockdown if they have nobody else to turn to. We are encouraging individuals who need support to call 01235 422600 or email [communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk)

The Community Hub team is currently available from:

8.30am-5pm Monday to Thursday

8.30am-4.30pm on Fridays

Our Housing Needs team are available to help people who are at risk of being made homeless or who are sleeping rough – for more details visit [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/housing)

Support is also available to those experiencing financial difficulties – to find out more please visit [southoxon.gov.uk/benefits](http://southoxon.gov.uk/benefits) / [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/benefits)

For those difficulty paying council tax can visit [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/counciltax) or call 0345 302 2315.

- **Support for businesses** - To find out more about the various support and grants available, and to sign up to receive notifications about new grant funding, businesses should visit [www.svbs.co.uk](http://www.svbs.co.uk).  
Financial support for businesses affected by restrictions continues to become available from the government and is administered locally by us. We are aware the amounts available will not cover all losses, but our teams are working hard to ensure the help is distributed swiftly.
- **COVID Marshalls** – The council’s advisory Covid Marshalls are on duty in our town centres and busy areas to engage, explain and encourage businesses and members of the public to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines to help keep everyone safe.
- **Joint Local Plan** – Vale of White Horse District Council are teaming up with South Oxfordshire District Council to develop a joint local plan. As both council’s share the same officer staff, this will result in significant savings for local residents and enable us to produce a joined up approach. The new plan will prioritise new policies to tackle carbon emissions, provide truly affordable housing and generate infrastructure for local communities.
- **White Horse Community Lottery** – A new community lottery will allow players to choose which local charity their money benefits. The lottery will have a weekly jackpot of £25,000 and will be available for residents to play online. The district council will not receive any of the proceeds, although some will go into a central community fund, all of which the council will distribute to good causes in the district’s voluntary and community sector. Later in the spring, the council will be inviting community groups and charities across the district to a launch event to explain how they can get involved and benefit from the money raised.
- **COVID-Safe Transportation Grant Scheme** - We have some government funding available for voluntary and community organisations to help with the costs of arranging and providing COVID-safe transportation for residents. Groups can receive £1,000 - £15,000 and it can go on revenue costs like paying for petrol as well as capital costs like PPE supplies or wear and tear on vehicles. Projects to be covered include:
  - transporting people to medical appointments, including to get their COVID jabs
  - getting people to the supermarket to do their essential shopping
  - delivering medical or food supplies to people.

For more info, please contact [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk)

## Major Planning Developments

- Planning enforcement:  
As always, please keep us informed with any potential issues relating to conformance with planning conditions at new developments such as the land South of Park Road and South of Highworth Road. We are in continual contact with the team to ensure that regulations are complied with, but the more eyes on the ground the easier it is to identify issues quickly. A local resident has made us aware that some of the new tree planting needs some care in the Park Road estate so we are following this up.
- Land South of Steeds Farm Appeal:  
A reminder that the date of appeal has been set for 10am 27/28/29/30 April 2021. Alongside the town council, we have made written representations on this case to the Planning Inspectorate arguing the importance of infrastructure for Faringdon.
- Volunteer Inn, 2 Gloucester St (P20/V3239/FUL)  
Due to the importance of protecting our town centre, there has been an extensive review by our team of this case, including the commissioning of two independent viability reports. We also welcome the constructive engagement between the town council and the applicants resulting in the inclusion of a commercial unit into the plans. We are now awaiting the final decision on the application which should be due shortly.
- 5 Lechlade Road, Old Gas Works (P20/V3172/RM)  
We were pleased to see that the application was updated in an attempt to address some of the concerns of Faringdon Town Council Planning & Highways Committee, though we note that at its latest meeting there were still some questions raised. We will follow these up with officers.
- Fernham Road P21/V0576/O  
An application has been made to renew the outline planning permission for 25 new homes at the end of Fernham Road. The original permission was granted prior to both the current Vale Local Plan and Faringdon Neighbourhood Plans being made, though it lies just outside the boundary of the existing Faringdon Neighbourhood plan anyway. As this is the first time we have dealt with this kind of renewal we are liaising with officers to determine which planning policies are deemed relevant in this case.
- New school in Park Road estate  
As the county council is the applicant for the proposed school, they will be responsible for the planning decision rather than the Vale district council. We obviously welcome the school as necessary infrastructure but are naturally disappointed to see that old-fashioned gas boilers are planning to be installed. Given our own experiences in starting to convert our council's buildings to green energy, we are all too aware of the difficulties and expense that comes with retrofitting.

## Councillor Surgeries

We are still suspending face to face councillor surgeries for the time being but are, of course, happy to take phone calls and emails from residents and town councillors at any time.

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