

District Council Report for Faringdon Town Council

Bethia Thomas and David Grant

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Having worked hard to deliver a COVID-safe environment for our residents to vote and for the various counts to take place, our officers are back to working hard on normal council business, and so are we.

We are pleased to be back working on the issues that matter to Faringdon and delighted to see how lively the town centre has been in recent weeks with people enjoying the music and local businesses, whilst staying safe and respectful of each other. You'll have seen our bright new banners reminding people to do their bit for Faringdon and keep themselves and others safe. We hope this spirit can help safely speed the town's recovery to a more vibrant future.

We're also delighted to congratulate the Farcycles cycling group on achieving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It is well deserved for everything they are doing to get Faringdon moving – teaching kids to cycle, renovating old bikes and hosting the annual cyclo sportive.

Local Issues to Faringdon

- **Funding for leisure returning to Faringdon:** We are expecting the results of the first stage of consultation on how to spend leisure funding that is being returned to Faringdon within the next month and look forward to discussing it further with you soon.
- **Faringdon Leisure Centre Reopening:** We are pleased to that Faringdon Leisure Centre has now reopened. We will update you on works to decarbonise the heating system as soon as we have more information.
- **Polling stations:** Our officers worked hard to provide a safe environment for voters in May's local elections. Please let us know if you have any comments on the new polling stations used.
- **Folly Park:** We are continuing in partnership between the town council and the Vale to progress all the issues that we are seeing there. We are planning to meet with officers of the district and town councils with all relevant stakeholders to discuss plans for the area.
- **Dog Warden:** We have contacted the Envirocrime Team in reference to several reports of dogs out of control in our parks; we are investigating options in conjunction with the town council.
- **Tree in Tuckers Park:** We have contacted our Tree Officer to investigate the future of a sycamore located in the park – again we are doing this in conjunction with the town council.
- **Drain cover Meadowbank:** A resident highlighted damage around a drain cover on Bryans Way – we are investigating the possibility of repairs to the tarmac surrounding it.

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

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

Support is also available to those experiencing financial difficulties – to find out more please visit southoxon.gov.uk/benefits / www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/benefits

For those difficulty paying council tax can visit 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.

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.

- **Resources for businesses:** We have downloadable posters for businesses to display in their windows, table tents and beer mats for pubs and cafés, and marketplace signage to welcome people back to shop safely. Now that guesthouses, cinemas, theatres and community centres have reopened throughout the district, new downloadable posters have been made available specifically for these venues.
- **Council meetings** – As you know, government legislation dictates that council voting must now only take place in person. Given that their advice is still for people to work from home wherever possible, we are disappointed with this decision, as working virtually had clear benefits for the council.

Where possible, we are still holding informal meetings online and, where formal votes are required, we are using hybrid meetings to allow those shielding to contribute to the meetings remotely, although they are barred from voting.

- **White Horse Community Lottery** – The new community lottery will be starting soon. Organisations from the district's voluntary and community sector are being invited to attend an event on Monday 14 June to find out how they can benefit from income raised. The lottery will have a weekly jackpot of £25,000 and will be available for residents to play online.
- **Air quality competition:** We are offering the chance to win a Micro scooter as part of our air quality superhero competition for primary school children. The prize will be given to the best design for a superhero to tackle air pollution, who can get about without using cars and whose superpowers can help make our air cleaner and clearer.

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.
- Land South of Steeds Farm Appeal:
The appeal inquiry is now closed and the planning inspector is expected to make a decision by the beginning of August. We hope this decision will reinforce the need for appropriate infrastructure for Faringdon.
- Volunteer Inn, 2 Gloucester St (P20/V3239/FUL)
Following the extensive review by our team of this case, including the commissioning of two independent viability reports, and the constructive engagement between the developers and the town council, we are now awaiting the final decision on the application which is due shortly.
- 5 Lechlade Road, Old Gas Works (P20/V3172/RM)
Following continued concerns raised by the town council, we were pleased to confirm with the case officer that there is no gated access remaining in the updated plans for this site.
- 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.
We have concerns about how the development links to the neighbouring estate and the lack of environmental information. We have therefore requested a temporary 'call in' to the district planning committee should officers be minded to accept this application. However, we hope to get these concerns addressed in advance of this and, if satisfied, may withdraw the request at that point.

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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