

District Councillor Debby Hallett's Report to North Hinksey Parish Council

15 Dec 2011

1. **Vale House** : after my urging for the owners of Vale House to hold an open community meeting about their planned changes, Ede Builders and Botley Alzheimers Home hosted a Q&A session on 2 Dec 2011. It was well-attended by members of the community, as well as community leaders: I spotted county councillor Janet Godden, district councillors Eric Batts and John Woodford, a Cumnor parish councillor, but I didn't see any North Hinksey parish councillors. The atmosphere was somewhat heated, as many people expressed their strong concerns about the intended use of the building as an HMO. Most of these concerns can also be seen in the letters posted on the Vale website. On the 9th of December 2011, Ede withdrew their application. Their withdrawal letter, which can be viewed on the planning web page, <http://bit.ly/sYfMne> , says they plan to re-submit quickly, and that they're likely to request permission to convert to flats.

2. **Vale Budget**: Cllr Andrew Pritchard emailed me to ask what services the Vale were legally obliged to provide. Here is my answer, which I hope you find informative and helpful:

This may not be 100% complete, but the services the Vale are required by statute to deliver include:

- Planning services
- Environmental Health services
- Housing & Council Tax Benefit services
- Homeless housing services
- Waste Collection & street cleaning services
- Standards regime covering the District Council and its parishes
- Electoral services
- Council Tax & Business Rates collection
- Licensing regulation
- Accounting & Audit function

The council also has the power, but not the duty, to provide:

- Leisure services, parks
- Museums, art services
- Economic development services
- Community facilities such as Wantage Civic Hall
- Off-street car parking
- Grants to community groups
- Commercial property for investment
- Planning enforcement of infringements
- Tourism promotion

Up until this month, Councils could only carry out non-statutory activities for which they had a specific power (by act of Parliament) to deliver. The Localism Act (became law as of 15/11/11) includes a "Power of general competence" which will allow Councils to do anything that is not unlawful. This will take effect sometime next year.

3. **Yarnell's Hill**: I enquired of the Highways Authority when this pot-hole-ridden, patched and neglected road might be resurfaced (much like the treatment Laburnum Rd had not too long ago). I

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was told that the HAMP (Highways Asset Management Plan) won't be finalised until February, but Yarnell's Hill is "considered a priority scheme within the county's programme, and therefore it is very likely to be included within next year's programme."

4. **Extreme weather:** The Vale has a plan in place to minimise potential disruption in the event of extreme weather this winter, and they urge parishes and residents to do the same. In the worst case, it might be necessary to cancel some bin collections. If this happens, the Vale will contact all councillors directly to inform them of the ongoing issues and what will happen next. My question of the parish council is, 'What would you like me to do if I receive such notification?'
5. **Win your Council Tax!** : Residents are being encouraged to sign up to receive their council tax bill by email to help save money, and those who do will be entered in a draw to have their entire 2012/13 council tax paid for them.

Council has agreed to pay the entire 2012/13 council tax bill for one resident drawn randomly from the e-billing list. To enter the draw, council tax payers need to sign up by Tuesday 31 January. Send an email to vowh.counciltax@secure.capita.co.uk

6. **Official statement about Westway Shopping Centre** in Botley - December 13, 2011

Following recent media reports the Vale of White Horse District Council would like to clarify the current situation regarding the proposed Westway Shopping Centre development in Botley -

Vale of White Horse District Council is working in partnership with other landowners in Botley to bring forward a development scheme for a food store adjacent to the Westway shopping precinct. Should terms be agreed, the plan would be brought forward for planning permission. At present, discussions are on-going with a potential developer. The council hopes to have further news in the New Year.

If the sale is successful, the council is currently considering the available options for using some of the capital raised to fund a potential refurbishment project for the Westway precinct.

7. **Free parking:** The Vale has introduced 2 hours free parking in the town car parks.
8. **Free wi-fi:** The Vale has introduced a trial run of free wi-fi in Wantage town centre. If it's well-received and successful, free wi-fi will roll out to other locations, one of which is Botley.
9. **County Cllr Janet Godden and I hold a Get It Sorted Session** every other month in a different part of the parish. Our next session is 10 January 2012, 6-7pm, at the Women's Institute in North Hinksey Lane.
10. **Reminder:** You can see all the current **North Hinksey planning applications** on my blog. I've tried to make it simple to find out what applications are currently under consideration in North Hinksey and Wytham ward. I add info as soon as I receive notice of the planning application from the Vale. I include the consultation period, targeted decision date, and a link to the Vale Planning site so readers can see what information about the application has already been received. See them at www.DebbyHallett.MyCouncillor.org.uk