

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

24 Jan 2013

1. **High Street Innovation Fund:** As I reported last month, Botley is to benefit from a £22,500 spend on 'revitalising the High Street experience'. Many projects (some eye-witness reports say all of them?) slated for completion by Christmas didn't happen for some reason. I am awaiting a response from the Cabinet member responsible to my question about the current status about what's happening. I'm disappointed in how this is being managed. Money must be spent by the end of March. Those items in *red italics* below apparently didn't happen:

- *Shop "wrapping" – 7 The Square (old video store) £2,000 1 Dec 2012*
- Community shop – 6 The Square (formerly Clovers) £3,000 1 Feb 2013
- Information Boards £3,800 1 February 2013
- Shoppers map for information board, including design, print and install £2,000 1 Feb 2013
- *Develop logo and branding for West Way (with artist, Oxford Brookes University, local young people) £300 1 Nov 2012*
- ByBox scheme (no cost) 31 Mar 2013
- *Christmas tree, lights and associated events £2,400 1 Dec 2012*
- *Drop down banners on lampposts £1,000 1 Dec 2012*
- Purchase and install benches £4,000 31 Mar 2013
- Paint lettering on front fencing £1,000 1 Feb 2013
- *Installation of recycling bins £1,500 1 Dec 2012*
- Paint gazebos and lettering above Co-op and lampposts £1,000 31 Mar 2012
- *Trader window Christmas display competition and possible Santa's grotto £500 1 Dec 2012*

2. **Planning Enforcement:** This month in I learned that the Vale doesn't have a programme of pro-active planning enforcement. That is, they don't send officers along to ensure that conditions attached to planning permission are complied with. Rather, planning enforcement depends on people contacting them about anything that's not in compliance with planning permission. This was news to me, but apparently it's been that way for years. This isn't understood even among councillors, let alone across the public.

This means that we residents are essentially the planning conditions police! If the parish council is interested in launching some kind of programme for follow up on planning permissions, especially the controversial ones, I would be happy to collaborate and help.

3. **West Way Re-development:** You are aware now of the big plans by Doric to redevelop the West Way shopping area into shops, cafes, cinema and housing. I think you know as much as (maybe more than) I do. Doric intends to begin public consultations 'soon'. I've had no word on exactly when. In fact, I feel we are all somewhat in the dark.

4. **Electoral Review of Vale of White Horse:** The LGBCE consultation ended 7 Jan. I mentioned last month that individual responses seem to carry more weight. I wrote in as a private citizen and I hope you did too. All comments will be published on the LGBCE website. Next is the decision, but they haven't said when that will be.

5. **Oxford Brookes Master Plan:** The adoption of the Oxford Brookes University Harcourt Hill master plan as a supplementary planning document to the delayed Local Development Plan (under development at the Vale) is now awaiting the completion by the university of a transport assessment requested by Oxfordshire County Council. I don't know when Cabinet will consider it, but I'm told it will NOT be at the February meeting. Send your comments to

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me, and I'll ensure they are passed on. Or you can email the Planning Policy Officer, Mark Williams, directly. mark.williams@southandvale.gov.uk

6. **Vale Budget 2013-14.** When Council tax is frozen, and the Vale's costs continue to rise (wages, utilities, etc), cuts have to be made. The Vale Cabinet is considering various suggestions tendered by officers. One of them is to close all public loos, to save £100k per year. Another suggestion is to charge parish councils for emptying dog waste bins, raising £16k per year. You can read about it from @OxfordTimes <http://t.co/BfWHFnR9>. If you have an opinion on any of this, contact the Leader of the Council (who is also the Finance Cabinet member) matthew.barber@whitehorsedc.gov.uk. (I don't see The Officer's Budget on the Vale website, though it is in the public domain. It was in Jan 2013 Scrutiny Cttee agenda.)

7. **Progress of Local Plan.** The Vale published this statement:

As part of our commitment to keep everybody informed about the development of the Local Plan, we have created an email group called The Vale Community. Anybody signed up to the community will receive regular updates on our progress, as well as special messages from those involved on the front line of the local plan's development, including parish community groups and councils. Anybody that wishes to sign up to the Vale Community, should send an email containing the word 'subscribe' to localplan@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

I've subscribed, but not yet received anything.

8. **Consultations:** There is a new Consultation system. Register to receive notifications of current and relevant consultations and to take part in them. More info here: <http://bit.ly/VrIWrm> There is one open consultation:

- **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**, to identify sites with potential for housing, assess their potential and when they are likely to be developed.

9. **Snow disruption to waste and recycling schedules:** The Vale says to put your bins out on the normal day. If they aren't collected, leave them out for three days then bring them in. If your service is missed, you can put out extra on your next pick-up day.

10. **Paying your council tax.** Government (i.e., RH Eric Pickles) announced that, from April 2013, you will be able to pay your council tax in 12 monthly instalments if you so wish (it's currently 10). We don't know yet what system changes are required (if any) at the Vale in order to make that happen, so we don't know either how much it will cost to make the changes or how you can notify the Vale to swap you over. I'll report more when I know.

11. **Local info online:** You can easily find current North Hinksey planning applications on my public-facing Facebook page: www.facebook.com/DebbyHallettLD (you don't need to be a registered Facebook user to see this page). I add info as soon as I receive notice of the planning application from the Vale. Included: consultation period, targeted decision date, and a link to the Vale Planning site so readers can see all information about the application.

12. **Anything else you'd like to hear about?** Please ask.