



# TOWN NEWS

A NEWSLETTER  
PRODUCED BY  
WANTAGE  
TOWN COUNCIL

## Annual Town Electorate meeting

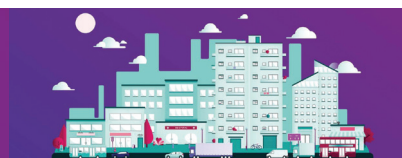
**7.30 PM MONDAY 12 APRIL**

The Town Council has decided to proceed with the Annual Town Electorate meeting at 7.30pm on Monday 12 April, but this year the meeting is going to have to be online using Zoom.

Everyone from the Wantage Parish is invited to participate. As well as a briefing on Council business by the Town Mayor, there will be reports from community organisations involved in giving support during the pandemic.

A presentation will be given on the Town Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan. There is also the opportunity for members of the public to raise questions relating to the town. To join the meeting go to <https://wantagec-gov-uk.zoom.us/>

## census 2021



Census 2021 will provide a snapshot of modern society asking questions about work, health and education to inform decisions about the future. It also helps decide how services are funded in your local area.

To start your census online, you will need your unique 16-character access code. Every household should receive a letter from 1st March with the access code, allowing you to complete the questionnaire on computer, mobile phone or tablet. Census day is 21 March but recipients will then have until 3rd May to complete the questionnaire.

The census will include questions about your sex, age, work, health, education and household size and ethnicity. For the first time, there will be a question asking people whether they have served in the armed forces, as well as voluntary questions for those aged 16 and over on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Results will be available within 12 months, although personal records will be locked away for 100 years, kept safe for future generations.

Access codes can also be found online via: <https://census.gov.uk/ni/where-to-find-your-access-code>. Paper census questionnaires to be completed and returned by post can be requested via: <https://census.gov.uk/en/request/paper-questionnaire/enter-address/>

Filling in the forms is compulsory and repeated failure to do so could result in a fine of up to £1,000.

For further information visit [census.gov.uk](https://census.gov.uk)

## Market Place pedestrianisation

### *Temporary versus permanent...*

The success of the vaccination programme to combat Covid-19 makes it unlikely that there is sufficient time to proceed with the extension of the temporary pedestrianisation on the south side of the Market Place before the pandemic restrictions are removed.

The temporary closure of the western end of the Market Place will continue until pandemic restrictions are ended. Prior to the pandemic, the Town Council had been progressing a scheme to permanently pedestrianise the closed area at the western end. It remains the Town Council's policy to make the western end closure permanent.

The temporary closure has helped to identify a number of issues that would need to be addressed for a permanent scheme, including access arrangements for delivery

vehicles and improvements to the appearance of the closed area. Work will be continuing on developing proposals over the coming weeks.

The survey conducted last year regarding the temporary pedestrianisation of the Market Place gave an indication that there might be public support to permanently pedestrianise a much wider area within the town centre. This is something the Town Council may seek to explore and consult upon at a later date.

## Spring is in the air

**Jim Sibbald, Councillor Major, Town Mayor of Wantage**

*This has been a challenging year due to COVID-19 but with the roll out of the vaccines and adherence to government guidelines the future looks promising.*

The Town Council has worked throughout the last year focussing on the support to the community and especially the vulnerable, while maintaining the statutory requirements placed on the Council.

Councillors, although elected, are volunteers and I would like to thank them for the dedication they have shown. I would like to thank the Council Staff, for making sure that the Council and its functions run smoothly, and I thank

especially the Town Clerk, William Falkenau for his 25 years of continuing and exemplary service. Huge thanks to everyone for their hard work and enthusiasm during these difficult times.

Moving towards the end of the civic year, on Monday 12th April 2021, we will hold virtually over Zoom the Annual Town Electorate meeting (see Town Council Website for agenda). I hope you will be able to join us. If not, then this newsletter will give you some idea of our work over the last year.

More information regarding the Council's activities can be found in the minutes at [wantagetowncouncil.gov.uk](http://wantagetowncouncil.gov.uk)

*Keep safe! Yours aye, Jim Sibbald*



## PLANNING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Planning Committee provides a local viewpoint on applications to the Planning Authority, which is the Vale of White Horse District Council.

Of all the committees the Planning Committee meets the most throughout the civic year.

Since May 2020 there have been 15 meetings with advice provided on 104 applications, ranging from a small extension to Crab Hill Reserved Matters.

The committee also has worked on the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan and responds to Planning Consultations from the District & County Council and the Government.

## Turn it off!

The campaign, launched in 2019 and supported by Public Health England, aims to help improve local air quality across southern Oxfordshire and the Vale by asking drivers to turn off their engines when they are not driving.



It was updated in October 2020 to encourage people to use less polluting means of transport, such as walking and cycling, for local journeys, where possible.

Public Health England has advised the following:

Keeping the engine running – known as idling – while parked at the side of the road, sitting in traffic, or waiting to collect someone, contributes to an increase in levels of air pollutants.

These air pollutants are linked to a higher chance of developing lung cancer, heart disease, asthma, coughs and bronchitis, particularly in vulnerable people such as older people and children.

The aim of our campaign is to encourage people to think about idling and if they are stopped for more

than a minute or parked then they should turn their engines off.

According to information from DEFRA, if a vehicle engine is turned off and restarted after a minute or more this will result in less pollution than if the vehicle was idling for that time.

Keeping the engine running when the vehicle is not moving wastes fuel. So, turning off makes sense from both a health viewpoint and a financial one.

This is a very simple small step that everyone can take and can make a difference.

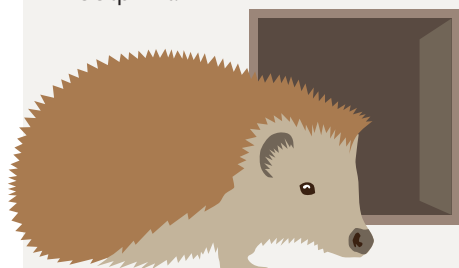
For further information tel. 01235 767975 or email: [env.health@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@southandvale.gov.uk)

Vale of White Horse District Council, Environmental Protection Team, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB

## CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

The focus of the Climate Emergency Sub-committee this year has been to fund local projects and create a Wantage Town Council (WTC) Action Plan.

We have reviewed the WTC carbon footprint as well as looking at what can be done throughout the town in raising awareness. We are expecting roadside verges to be cut less frequently during the coming season, to help reduce this footprint.



The current Covid situation emphasised the need to ensure that we have appropriate, signed and well-maintained footpaths and cycling paths.

A review of these around the town is underway with HarBUG (the Harwell Bicycle Users Group) so we can improve the connections to ensure that people can walk and cycle safely.

Sustainable Wantage have made good progress on the four projects that the sub-committee funded. They were able to purchase an electric bike to help with food deliveries.

The REUSE, RECYCLE, REDUCE guidance list is being compiled so we will have a resource to check before we put potentially useful items in the rubbish.

Although, Oxfordshire puts very little into landfill thanks to Biffa, we want people to be aware of what they throw away and how the waste could be used to help for example hedgehogs!

The projects reviewing diversity, and linking wildlife corridors and green spaces in Wantage are also progressing well.

We hope to get more of you involved when we can. Look out for more details for ways you can get involved.

## POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

### Grant support for vital Town projects

Through its regular grants programme the Council has supported the fantastic work undertaken by many of our key voluntary organisations in the Town.

These include **Wantage Independent Advice Centre**, **Sweatbox**, **The October Club**, **Vale & Downland Museum**, **Wantage**

**Counselling Service**, **Grove and Wantage Family Community Group (GROW)**, **Be Free Young Carers**, the **Letcombe Brook Project** and **Sustainable Wantage**.

We have also responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by making additional funds available to key areas of need including substantial grants to **The Ray Collins Charitable Trust**, **A Helping**

**Hand, Grove and Wantage**, the **Independent Advice Centre**, the **Repair Café** for their work in repurposing laptops for schoolchildren and we have stepped in to provide free school meal

**"we have responded to COVID-19, by making additional funds available to key areas"**

vouchers to over 300 eligible children over the Christmas and Half Term breaks.

The Council also has a general grants fund which organisations can apply to and in the year funding has been made available to **King Alfred's Scouts** to assist them in repairs to the Scout hut in Springfield Road, to **Park Run** who will be organising a series of events later in the year, **Wantage Choral Society**, **Oxfordshire Army Cadet Club**, **Arts Hub Wantage** and **Home Start – Southern**.



# Leisure & Amenities

## COMMITTEE REPORT – SPRING 2021

*Over the past year the following has been achieved:*

### CEMETERY MATTERS

- Extensive repairs to the cemetery approach road.
- The Tree Conservation Volunteers have planted trees along the cemetery boundary. We thank them for their hard work.
- We are investigating benches and trees to replace those damaged in The Garden of Remembrance.

### ALLOTMENTS

- There is currently a waiting list, but ways of making more plots available are being investigated. We are pleased that so many residents are enjoying this activity.

### MARKET PLACE

- There is now a defibrillator in our historic red telephone box in the Market Place. The location of other defibrillators can be viewed on the SCAS app.

- The western end of the Market Place was closed to traffic to make more pedestrian space during the pandemic. The survey results relating to the temporary closure of a wider area can be found on the Council's website.
- The County Council installed bike racks in the Market Place to encourage more cycling.
- We have helped our market traders by temporarily waiving the tolls. We thank them for their loyalty, and helping our residents during these challenging times.
- Our Town Centre Manager, Andrea Yates, has been working hard with market traders and businesses in the town to help them through Covid. Jim Mitchell is working alongside her on events and publicity.

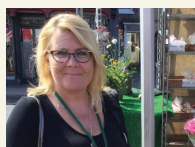
### OTHER TOWN MATTERS

- Signs have been erected on roads leading to the Market Place stating unsuitable for HGVs.
- We are working to improve benches, notice boards and other street furniture, and replace old and shabby street signs, so let us know if you see something that requires attention.
- The Christmas lights cheered everyone and we plan to enhance them for Christmas 2021.

## Promotion, Communications & Events

Well what a time it has been! In 2020, after a year of settling in, the council elected in 2019 found itself facing an unprecedented situation that no one could have anticipated when lockdown started on 23rd March. This has of course dominated proceedings since then but has truly shown the town in a good light.

Town Centre Manager, Andrea Yates, starting her job just before lockdown, has done a tremendous job of facilitating and promoting both our regular markets and the fantastic Sunday Christmas markets that happened fair weather and foul in the run up to Christmas, and has loads more ideas up her sleeve.



Our revamped website and newsletters, as well as the survey about pedestrianisation, have ensured much improved communication and access to information, we're happy to receive any suggestions for further improvement.

Silver Band concerts and other live music in the western end of the Market Place, our rich variety of markets during 2019, then our volunteers reception promised so much for 2020, but we have had to hold our collective breath.

The markets that have continued throughout, the sunny afternoons in the west end, shine a hopeful light on the path out of lockdown, and our celebrations when it ends.



**Published by  
Wantage Town Council**

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