Vale of White Horse District Council

CORPORATE PLAN 2012-2016: VISION FOR THE VALE

Foreword

By the Leader of the Council, Councillor Matthew Barber

I am delighted to present the Council's Corporate Plan for 2012-16. This document sets out our key priorities and objectives for the next four years.

Our Vision for the Vale is one of thriving communities and a strong local economy. We will work with our dedicated councillors, hard working staff and inspiring partners to deliver these objectives.

We have already taken steps to improve the local economy in our market towns with the introduction of 2hr free parking and the piloting of free wi-fi, and we will continue to build the local economy across all parts of the district.

We are committed to listening to the needs of local communities and providing responsive services for the public which make the most of new technology and showcase excellent customer service.

We will tackle the difficult issue of housing provision, ensuring adequate building to support our economic and social needs whilst understanding associated environmental concerns.

All of this will be achieved whilst maintaining value for money for tax payers. We will keep council tax low. We will welcome the opportunities being presented to local councils by the Government's changes to local government and always seek to deliver efficient services at a low cost to you.

We are committed to taking care of your interests throughout the Vale with enterprise, energy and efficiency

Introduction

This corporate plan sets out the council's strategic objectives and corporate priorities.

The plan will help us to achieve our aim of "taking care of your interests across the Vale with enterprise, energy and efficiency", and vision for a Vale characterised by:

- a strong local economy
- positive and constructive work with community groups
- housing for people who need it
- communities involved in decisions about development and other things affecting their local area
- an efficiently run council, keeping council tax low.

We consulted widely with residents and stakeholders to help us to develop this plan. The corporate plan does not seek to cover everything the council does but instead focuses upon those issues and services that we have identified, with the help of residents and service users, to be the most important issues and top priorities. We will include the detail of the action the council will take to deliver the priorities in our annual service plans.

We have identified some key measures to enable us to track our progress in delivering the corporate plan priorities. For some performance measures we have set a four year target to be achieved by the end of the period covered by the plan. For others, we have set an annual target for 2012/13 and at the end of that year we will set a new target to be achieved by the end of the plan. Where a performance measure requires us to collect new data, we will collect benchmark data during 2012/13 and then set a target covering the remaining three years of the plan.

We will report annually on progress.

The council is operating in conditions of unprecedented change and uncertainty and this level of change and uncertainty is likely to continue for some time in the context of government changes to how local government is funded. This means that budgets are and will continue to be, under enormous pressure. The corporate plan reflects these conditions and will be important in helping to guide our decisions on how we invest our financial and staffing resources over the next four years.

Partnership working

We have direct responsibility for a number of public services and when we identify these as a priority within the corporate plan we can allocate resources to reflect this. In addition to the services that we are directly responsible for delivering, a number of public, private and voluntary organisations provide

services to our residents; many of these link with our services or contribute to the overall objectives that we are trying to achieve for the area and we work closely with these partners to ensure that through joint working residents receive the best service possible.

Our work with partners takes place both locally to address local issues and also through some formal partnerships, which may be either service specific or more broadly strategic. Some of the key formal partnerships include:

- The Vale Partnership (VP) – this is the local strategic partnership (LSP) and is made up of relevant councils and a number of other public, private and voluntary sector organisations. The VP is responsible for developing a sustainable community strategy for the district. The council is also a member of the Oxfordshire Partnership, which is the LSP for the county of Oxfordshire.

- The Community Safety Partnership (CSP), which has a similar range of partners to the LSP and focuses on joint working to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and address broader community safety issues

- Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership – this is the local enterprise partnership (LEP) for Oxfordshire This is a voluntary body made up of representatives from business, academia and the wider public sector. The Partnership's overarching aim is to be the catalyst for realising Oxfordshire's economic and commercial potential. The Oxfordshire LEP is responsible for delivering the benefits of the Science Vale UK enterprise zone.

- Oxfordshire Waste Partnership – this is a partnership of the county and district councils of Oxfordshire who are working together to continuously improve waste management services within the county.

The council also plans to establish a Vale-wide business partnership in Autumn 2012 to enable wider engagement with businesses across the Vale, and sharing of best practice across the district. The partnership will build on the good practice of existing partnerships to provide a common forum for all businesses across the Vale. The forum will provide opportunities for better networking and support for businesses, and avoid duplication of effort. A Vale-wide business partnership will enable the council to work with businesses to agree priorities for investment and growth across the local area.

The corporate plan distinguishes between priorities that the council can deliver directly and those where by working with partners it seeks to encourage and influence others, and play its part, but cannot directly control the outcome.

Other plans and strategies

The corporate plan should be read alongside, and in the context of, other key objectives, plans and strategies that guide the council's business and the way it works, including:

THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The sustainable community strategy is a partnership strategy developed by the Vale Partnership (see above) and sets out the contribution that the council and its partners can make to delivering an overarching and long term vision for the district. The vision is for a sustainable Vale:

- o with prosperous, inclusive and thriving communities that have good access to a range of housing, jobs and services
- o where everyone can feel safe and enjoy life
- o where our needs can be met without compromising the natural and built heritage or the ability of future generations to meet their needs

For further information about the sustainable community strategy, please contact corporate.strategy@southandvale.gov.uk

THE LOCAL PLAN AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 sets out policies and proposals for development such as housing and employment, and determines how the land in the district will be used. Our Local Plan will gradually be replaced by a group of documents known as the Local Development Framework (LDF). A key document within the LDF is the Core Strategy, which sets out how the council will help deliver much needed housing, opportunities for high quality jobs and thriving town centres across the district. We plan to have the Core Strategy in place by the end of 2013.

For further information please visit www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk or contact planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

CORPORATE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

The council has set equality objectives in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to support the delivery of the councils' Corporate Plan priorities. The objectives are:

- • provide equality of access to services and our employment opportunities
- • support projects to tackle hate crime and foster good relations between different groups of people in the Vale
- • seek to improve access to the town centres in the Vale for people with disabilities, carers and older people

For further information about the council's equality objectives and action plan, please contact our corporate strategy team at corporate.strategy@southandvale.gov.uk.

MARKET TOWN ACTION PLANS

The council, in partnership with town partnerships, chambers of commerce and town councils, has developed and is implementing a market towns strategy and associated action plans. The council secured funding from SEEDA's Small Rural Towns Programme to help deliver a series of targeted actions to improve vitality in the Vale's town centres.

For further information about the market town action plans, please contact economic.development@southandvale.gov.uk

For further information about the corporate plan please contact our corporate strategy team at corporate.strategy@southandvale.gov.uk.

EXCELLENT DELIVERY OF KEY SERVICES

Delivering high quality services and customer satisfaction are at the heart of what we do. This applies to all of the services we provide and everything we do, but in the corporate plan, we have focussed on the services that people tell us are most important to them.

We have identified a range of measures to help us track how well we are doing and which enable us to:

- compare our own year on year performance
- compare our performance against national benchmarks
- take into account the views of residents, service users and other stakeholders on the quality of services and customer experience.

What we will do	How we will measure success
Put residents at the heart of service delivery and seek to provide an excellent customer experience	• percentage of people who say they are satisfied with the way the council runs things (collect baseline data in 2012/13) • percentage of people who agree with the statement that the council does a good job for people like me (collect baseline data in 2012/13) • percentage of people satisfied with the way the council dealt with their enquiry (all methods of

	contact) (collect baseline data in 2012/13)
Keep residents and other stakeholders informed about our services, activities and spending and ensure we take their views into account before making key decisions	• percentage of people who say they feel well or fairly well informed by the council about the services it provides (collect baseline data in 2012/13) • percentage of people who feel they can inform decisions affecting their local area (collect baseline data in 2012/13)
Deliver high performing services with particular emphasis on achieving excellent levels of recycling, keeping streets and public spaces clean and attractive and ensuring good quality sports and leisure provision	• percentage of people who say they are satisfied with the cleanliness of the streets and pavements (collect baseline data in 2012/13) • percentage of people who say they are satisfied with the waste collection service overall (collect baseline data in 2012/13) • percentage of people who are satisfied with provision of sports and recreational activity (collect baseline data in 2012/13) • Increase the recycling rate to 75 per cent (by 2016) • one of the top ten councils nationally for recycling • maintain the average number of hours taken to remove fly-tips in accordance with our service standards • achieve ratings of good or excellent for overall satisfaction in sports centre user satisfaction surveys(all centres)

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

Protecting the quality of services during difficult economic and financial conditions is a central concern for the council and we know that our residents and service users expect value for money.

Over the past two years we have introduced a 'fit for the future' programme to look closely at everything we do to identify and reduce waste and unnecessary costs. We have also developed and extended our partnership working and shared services with South Oxfordshire District Council to achieve efficiencies in service delivery that have delivered significant savings.

The Council will continue this work to ensure that lower costs come from improved efficiency rather than service cuts.

What we will do	How we will measure success
Keep council tax low	• to keep council tax for district services in the lowest 20 nationally and work towards being in the lowest 10
Agree prudent and sustainable medium term financial plans	• no adverse comment from external auditors in annual governance report
Reduce energy usage throughout the council's operations	• reduce energy use throughout the councils operations[1] (collect baseline data in 2012/13) • reduce business mileage (collect baseline data in 2012/13)
Continue to work in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council to extend the sharing of services and resources	• examples of services improving through joint working • opportunities for further savings, through extending sharing of resources with South Oxfordshire District Council, reviewed and proposals brought forward

MEETING HOUSING NEED

The Council understands how important it is for people to find the housing they need and which enables them to live within a reasonable distance of their work and to stay near their families.

The council plays a vital role in ensuring that people in the district have access to good quality, affordable homes whilst ensuring that development is carried out sensitively in a way which enhances the area. We also recognise that new housing is essential to economic success and that the provision of essential infrastructure that supports housing growth is vitally important.

Through our core strategy, we set out what are the most appropriate locations for housing development in the district and set targets for affordable housing. We process planning applications so that development can go ahead and have a role to play in ensuring that developers contribute an appropriate amount of funding to support additional infrastructure required to make their developments successful for the people living in them.

A wide range of other agencies and organisations are involved in ensuring that housing development takes place and the corporate plan, therefore,

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[1] In 2012/13 we will complete the fifth year of our current energy saving programme, which includes a 20% energy reduction target over the 5 years of the programme

includes a focus on facilitating development in partnership with others, recognising that whilst the council cannot directly control many elements of housing development it has a key role to play in influencing others to act.

Meeting housing need	
INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF MARKET AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING	
What we will do	**How we will measure success**
Set housing targets and identify land supply to meet future housing need	• adopt core strategy • regular monitoring of performance against targets • ensure we have a rolling five year housing land supply
Process planning applications for housing promptly	• 70 per cent of major applications are determined within the period of the initial planning performance agreement target • 75 per cent minor planning applications agreed within eight weeks
Secure sufficient financial contributions from development to deliver essential infrastructure	• community infrastructure levy (CIL) charging schedule in place by December 2013 • secure 100 per cent of CIL financial contributions by the due date • demonstrate annually that we have achieved necessary facilities and infrastructure to support development
Ensure that new developments include a range of different types of affordable housing to meet local needs	• target percentage achieved
What we will facilitate in partnership with others	**How we will measure success**
Work with developers to overcome obstacles to development	• sites with potential problems identified and action plans to overcome these agreed • report on progress achieved against action plan • number of new developments started
Work with local communities to identify suitable sites for community led housing schemes	• annual report setting out the council's contribution towards bringing development sites forward in response to community led and neighbourhood plans

BUILDING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Oxfordshire has one of the strongest economies in the South East and relatively low unemployment but in common with the rest of the country faces considerable economic challenges.

Whether it is our three market towns, our larger villages such as Grove and North Hinksey or the rural hinterland of the Vale, our economy needs support to strengthen the local economy in these difficult times.

Supporting the local economy continues to be a priority and we will continue to develop our work with partners to support market towns to retain their viability and improve infrastructure that businesses across the district need to be successful.

Last year, the Science Vale UK (SVUK) area was successful in achieving enterprise zone status and provides an opportunity for us to support the hi-tech businesses that are thriving in the Vale. The council is committed to working with its partners so that maximum benefit is obtained from the opportunity presented by the SVUK enterprise Zone.

What we will do	How we will measure success
Continue to invest to improve the viability and attractiveness of our towns	• two hour free car parking introduced in market towns by end of 2011 • annual town centre vitality survey, including footfall and vacant shop surveys • percentage increase in footfall is above the national percentage increase (annual) • percentage of vacant retail units in the main retail areas of the three market towns is less than national rate (annual) • number of local units in VAT and/or PAYE based enterprises: Baseline: 2011= 5940 measure: percentage increase each year above England level percentage increase. • impact of public wi-fi scheme piloted in Wantage • market town strategy reviewed and annual action plans developed • progress against annual action plans
Develop and implement local development	• development orders in place by

orders to stimulate business growth at Milton Park and Harwell Science Campus	June 2012 • annual report on the number and square metres of new business units developed under provisions of the development order
Enter into a commercial partnership to secure redevelopment of Abingdon town centre	• refurbishment of Abbey Centre completed • redevelopment of the Charter substantially completed by end of plan period
Enter into a commercial partnership to secure new retail development at Botley and use some of the proceeds to improve Westway shopping centre	• consultation on proposed development carried out • new retail development built and operating by end of corporate plan period • improvements to Westway shopping centre agreed and implemented
Review the potential for building a new leisure centre in the Wantage/Grove area as Wantage expands	• options study produced by end of 2012
What we will facilitate in partnership with others	**How we will measure success**
Roll out faster broadband across the district	• annual survey of businesses to understand extent of problem and measure perception of improvement • percentage of exchanges enabled with ADSL2 (up to 20Mbps) and how many homes/businesses this covers in district(s) (4 yr target) • Broadband UK funding spending achieved in district
Deliver the benefits of the Science Vale UK enterprise zone	• Science Vale UK business plan delivered • number of jobs created and number of square metres of new business units developed • the annual growth in business rates generated by the Enterprise Zone that is available to be re-invested in the local area
Improve Infrastructure to support business growth	• strategy for investment for enterprise zone business rates growth agreed with Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership • strategy implemented and progress confirmed in annual report

Maintain low levels of crime and anti social behaviour	• at least 99 per cent of people feel safe walking alone in their community in daytime • at least 86 per cent of people feel safe walking alone in their community after dark • monitor performance against objectives in community safety strategy
Build on the 'Choose Abingdon' partnership to create a district-wide business partnership	• number of Choose Abingdon loyalty cards held. Baseline (2011) = 1430 to increase to 2000 by 2016. • number of businesses who are "members" of Vale-wide business partnership. (establish baseline in 2012/13, measure yearly thereafter)

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES

The Council recognises the enormous amount of work that local councils and volunteers - from community, voluntary or faith organisations or individually – do to improve their communities and the quality of life of people living and working in them. The huge range of services and facilities provided by local councils and the community, voluntary and faith sectors bring enormous benefit. Supporting communities and volunteers to continue to identify solutions for their local issues and implement them is a priority for the council.

Our aim is to work with a range of partners in the community, voluntary and faith sectors to help them to take action to provide and improve services and facilities in response to identified local need.

Recent initiatives from central government mean that there is even more scope for local communities to take the initiative to improve their area through local action and to get involved in decisions affecting where they live. Although it is not yet clear what all of the possibilities may be for getting involved, for example, in local land use issues through Neighbourhood Planning, or managing delivery of a service locally, we want to make sure that local communities have information about, and can explore, the opportunities available to them.

What we will do	How we will measure success
Improve the way we work with local communities and their representative bodies to create opportunities to localise service delivery	• examples of localised service delivery

Offer grants to voluntary and community organisations who are delivering projects and services that support our objectives or those in need	• amount of grant awarded and number of projects funded and number of projects completed. • annual report on key grant aided projects setting out benefits to local community
Increase usage of Wantage Civic hall	• plan agreed for increasing usage of Wantage Civic Hall • increase in the number of bookings and users of the Civic Hall (collect baseline data 2012/13) • decrease in net expenditure (set target based on 2012/13 user baseline)
What we will facilitate in partnership with others	
Support rural communities to identify local issues and needs, and solutions available to meet them.	• support development of community-led plans • number of actions in community-led plans progressed with the support of the council each year
Encourage communities to consider developing Neighbourhood Plans as a means of shaping their local environment	• local neighbourhood groups provided with information and advice about developing Neighbourhood Plans
Devolve responsibility for delivery of services to parish councils, community groups and others where it makes sense to do so	• specific examples of devolved services in place