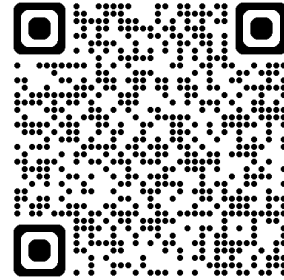


June 2026

VOWH District Councillor Report
for Ridgeway Ward

You can now view this report (and previous ones) at
<https://steady.page/en/a-view-from-the-ridgeway/>



Letcombe Brook Project

Funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy, a planning charge on new developments, has allowed the District Council to award a grant of £5,000 per annum for next three years to Letcombe Brook Project. This will enable the charity to continue to do important work protecting our local chalk stream and the surrounding environment to maintain and enhance ecological diversity, minimise flooding and pollution, and even improve our well being.

A417

Oxfordshire County Council are completing an ecology report before reviewing ditch clearance. Many thanks to the Future Flooding Resilience Group for all of their persistence progressing this.

New strategic authority update (different to Local Government Reorganisation)

Leaders from the region met in Reading on 17 June to discuss a letter from the government proposing a Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA) for an area covered by Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Swindon to oversee things like strategic transport infrastructure, economic development and regeneration. This proposal is different to a strategic area overseen by a mayor. An FSA is overseen by representatives of all the constituent councils. To establish an FSA the government requires all councils in the area to be in consensus, however some councils in Oxfordshire and Berkshire felt they could not lend their support due to the lack of certainty of committed investment and funding, which wasn't present in the proposal. Not related but since then the Prime Minister has announced he is stepping down and who knows what will happen next... We, of course, will continue to be open to future discussions and will continue to work constructively with partners across the Thames Valley and with the government for something that reflects local priorities and delivers real benefits.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire are working closely together to prepare for the key government announcement regarding the future shape of local government in the area. This is different from the above strategic authority update(!): LGR relates to scrapping our district and county council and having instead 1, 2 or 3 "unitary" councils that do everything that is currently spread across district and county. (Existing town and parish councils will still provide very local services to their communities.) It will not be known whether there will be one, two or three unitary authorities for Oxfordshire until the government announces its 'minded-to' decision, which is its preferred, provisional decision

before it's put into law. This announcement is expected before the parliamentary summer recess, which starts on 16 July. When the government announces its 'minded to' decision, it will be followed by a structural changes order (SCO), expected later in 2026. This will set out the legal basis and process for moving to the new council(s) arrangements. From that point, the existing councils will enter a transition period, working together to prepare for the new structures. This will include the election of a shadow authority or authorities in May 2027. This shadow body(ies) will act as a temporary council(s), making key decisions and preparing for the new organisation(s). The existing councils will continue to deliver services up until the new council(s) officially come into effect on "vesting day", which is expected to be on 1 April 2028.

Joint Local Plan - and now there are two!

Our first [Joint Local Plan](#) is currently being examined by government-appointed inspectors, with hearings taking place early July so hopefully I'll be able to share more in coming months.

The Council now has to start working on our Joint Local Plan 2045, and has published a timetable outlining the main stages and milestones in the process. New government regulations mean that at the same time as working towards adopting our first Joint Local Plan, we are required to start preparing our next plan for the area, which would run to 2045. This is known as 'twin-tracking'. Despite the timescales being after when our District Council will no longer exist, it is still important to get this right as the Local Plans "move to" to the new unitary council and will be applied to the area that they were developed for.

You can find out more about what this means on [the Joint Local Plan 2045 webpage](#).

Wantage Market Place

Hopefully you saw my Facebook post (many others were available) and you had a chance to have your say on Oxfordshire County Council's proposed redesign of Wantage Market Place. I went along to the drop event in June and found it helpful in understanding the proposed plans. I also came away with lots of ideas for feedback. I will share my response in full separately on <https://steady.page/en/a-view-from-the-ridgeway/>

Although by the time you read this the survey deadline will have likely closed, hopefully this link will still work for you to see what they were suggesting.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/roadworks/future-transport-projects/wantage-market-place>

Reminder: Cost-of-living support and advice drop in

The next stops on the Community Hub team's roadshow providing advice on housing support, energy and heating grants, and other ways to help manage household costs will be:

- **Wednesday 15 July**, 2-4pm at Vale Community Impact Pop-Up Café (Petypher House), Kingston Bagpuize OX13 5FR
- **Tuesday 11 August**, 11am to 1pm at Didcot Baptist Church, 43 Wantage Road, Didcot, OX11 0BS

You are welcome to drop in to the roadshow venue at any time, no bookings are required. I will share further dates as I hear them.

Recycling Centres

Thank you to those of you who have been contacting me raising issues with the booking system for our local recycling centre. I have fed back these issues to colleagues at Oxfordshire County Council. Although as a District Council we don't control the recycling centres we do have a responsibility for things like fly tipping. I was therefore pleased to support a recent motion that will ensure we find out the real impact of the changes on our local area e.g. providing statistics on fly tipping. We can then use an evidence based approach on following up with Oxfordshire County Council as needed.

Abbey Meadow outdoor pool in Abingdon

Bookings are available via the Better UK app or [through the website](#).

Park Yoga

Sessions take place at various parks in Abingdon, Botley, Didcot, Faringdon and further afield every Sunday at 9.30am - last session of this summer is scheduled for 14 September. As the sessions are weather dependent, people are encouraged to check their local Park Yoga Facebook page on the morning of the session for any updates. More information about Park Yoga locations and other Active Communities outdoor activities can be found on [South Oxfordshire](#) and [Vale of White Horse](#) websites.

Fancy watching something different?

With recent improvements to facilities at Abbey House, full Council meetings can now be watched live or watched later on the councils' [Committee Meetings YouTube channel](#).

Cllr Hannah Griffin
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(8 July 2026)