

Publication version

Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024

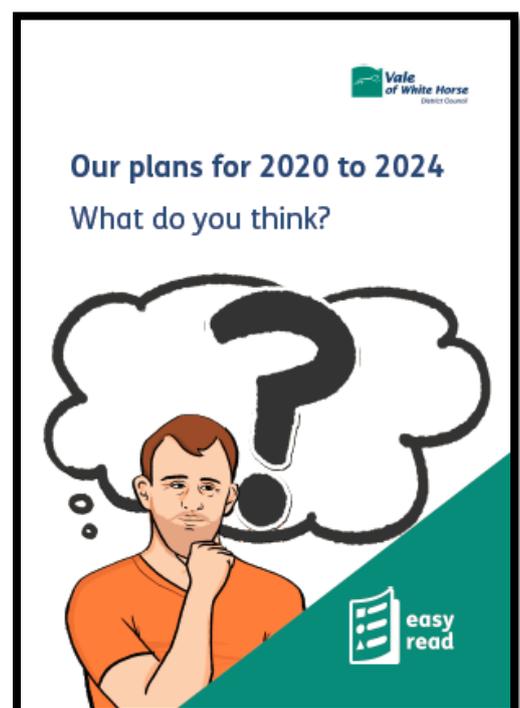
ENGAGEMENT REPORT

A review of the feedback on the vision and priority themes, programmes and example projects for the Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024. The plan will help councillors focus the councils' work on what they and those living and working in the district believe will make the district a better place now and for future generations.

OCTOBER 2020



A video of Councillors talking about the Corporate Plan was used to introduce the themes and encourage participation (above); the Easy Read comment form (right) was available alongside the online survey.



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The appendices are available as two separate documents on our website on the [Corporate Plan page](#):

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APPENDIX A – BACKGROUND TO THE ENGAGEMENT

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NB: We report in percentages even when there are less than 100 responses. When stating percentages in the analysis, we are referring to the percentage of respondents that answered the specific question, rather than the total number of responses to the overall survey. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up over .5 and rounding down under .5

Words that appear in italics are quotes taken from comments received.

SUMMARY

This report has been produced by council officers to analyse the comments received to the vision and six priority themes, programmes and example projects in the Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 engagement survey. The Corporate Plan sets the strategic direction for the council and creates a vision and priorities for the councils' work for those living and working in the district. The plan is updated every four years and our current plan will be replaced by this one.

We ran a public engagement exercise and asked for feedback on the six priority themes and illustrative projects and actions that are being proposed to deliver the plan. A survey was open to all those living and working in Vale of White Horse, as well as council staff and councillors. We asked for feedback on the themes particularly in the context of the financial and recovery challenges in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The engagement ran for four weeks between 16 July and 13 August 2020. The survey included 23 questions, plus another 4 questions that were aimed at district council staff and councillors. In total 773 responses were received, specifically 772 online submissions and 1 postal response - an Easy Read version of the survey. The postal responses were manually inputted into our online consultation system, SmartSurvey. In the two months since launching this survey and running other council engagement activities, we've had around 70 new sign ups to our consultation databases. This is nearly double than what we usually have.

Overall, 2,471 comments were received; with many of those containing several remarks or points within them. Participants were asked a range of questions relating to the themes, programmes and example projects, as well as their feedback on the proposed vision, and if they thought there was anything was missing from the themes.



Social media posts on Facebook and Twitter were used throughout the engagement to help reach a wide audience

The majority of people responding, 89%, did so as an individual or member of the public, while 4% of responses were made by a business, organisation or community group and 3% as a district, county or town / parish councillor or officer. 4% were district council staff and the remaining responded as 'other'.

The engagement highlighted that there is strong overall support for the draft themes, programmes and projects, and the vision in the Corporate Plan. The themes, programmes and example projects received a variety of comments which will be explored further in this report.

All of the thousands of comments we received have been read and considered as part of the analysis and reporting. This engagement report has informed recommendations, discussions and decisions on the preparation of the Corporate Plan. Where specific questions were raised within the comments we have addressed them in the report wherever possible. If responders feel that there are questions that need a specific response from us, please get in touch using the contact information in the 'further information' section of this report.

Key findings and recommendations

The council thanks everyone who took part and gave us feedback on the draft Corporate Plan 2020-24. This engagement report and its appendices will be published online on the Corporate Plan page of [our website](#), alongside the Corporate Plan.

The **key findings** from the engagement are summarised below.

- The engagement highlighted that there is strong overall support for the vision for Vale of White Horse District Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24. 78% of participants agree with the vision statement, answering either 'strongly agree' or 'agree'. Nearly half of those responding to this question, 328, also provided comments on the proposed vision statement. A lot of the comments focused on providing alternative wording to sharpen the vision and improve on the perceived ambiguity and the length of the statement. Many commented that it would be preferable to have a shorter vision that was more of a strapline and that some wording distracted from the overall intention.
- The take up amongst age groups were not equally represented in the survey with 59% of respondents over the age of 55. Whilst this is not unusual with this type of engagement, this is not reflective of the wider population in the Vale, where residents aged 65-74 and 55-64 form 13% and 11% of the total respectively.
- The engagement highlighted the most important theme was Theme 3, Building Healthy Communities, with very little separation between the second and third highest scoring themes which were Theme 2, Tackling the Climate Emergency and Theme 6, Working in an Open and Inclusive Way.

The high relevance assigned to Theme 6, Working in an Open and Inclusive Way, suggests that respondents value honesty and answerability in a significant way.

- Respondents believed that the Vale should have set more ambitious targets in relation to the climate emergency. Many believed that the aspiration of becoming a carbon neutral district by 2045 failed to reflect the gravity of the situation and that, therefore, the council should reassess its goals. Furthermore, a contrast was drawn between the Vale's climate emissions targets and the more ambitious ones set by South Oxfordshire.
- It is emphasised throughout the engagement findings that walking and cycling and the infrastructure provision to support those activities are of strong importance to respondents. Many cited that not only are they good for our physical and mental health

but switching more journeys to active travel will improve health, quality of life, the environment, and local productivity. These are substantial 'win-wins' that benefit individual people and the community as a whole.

- There was recognition that the infrastructure to support cycling and walking was not something wholly within the district council's domain. It was evident that the Covid-19 pandemic had clearly allowed respondents to reflect and review how they approach leisure activities, with a swell of support for protecting green spaces as opposed to "bricks and mortar" fitness and leisure provision. It was highlighted that many respondents had discovered new paths and routes during the Covid-19 lockdown period that they were previously unaware of. It was suggested that there could be benefit in a holistic active travel strategy for the district or on a county scale and that it could also help the council to achieve other corporate goals, for example in relation to the Climate Emergency. There is county wide active travel from OxCoCo <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/active-travel>.

- A fifth of the respondents when commenting on Theme 4, Building Stable Finances, wished to see the Vale undertake an in-depth review of its current services and processes to identify wasteful spending and inefficiencies. With many suggesting it should embed a culture of continuous improvement and review to ensure that it continued to provide value for money.

Responders also questioned why Theme 4, Building Stable Finances, was necessary. They suggested that the council should have been taking these actions as a matter of course and wondered why Vale of White Horse had not done so.

- It was also of note that respondents thought that the council should provide greater transparency in terms of its finances and decision making. Many thought that the amount of information currently provided was insufficient and opaque and that decisions are taken behind closed doors without the public being involved. They wished to see clear, easy-to-understand data which the average resident could understand.

The interlinked issue of accountability also featured heavily amongst responses with many responders wanting there to be clearer lines of responsibility when it came to decisions and more opportunities to hold the council to account.

- There was a strong feeling coming through the engagement around the Vale of White Horse District Council's potential ability to generate income and the perceived negative impact of disposing of assets. While many respondents welcomed and recognised the need for the Vale to look at ways of generating additional revenue and income. They were, concerned about the costs of increased charges to residents and businesses. Further, some questioned the financial wisdom regarding the disposal of assets. They suggested that this type of selling was a short-term solution to the financial challenges faced by the council and could actually be counterproductive.
- It is of note throughout the engagement that respondents welcomed the opportunity to engage with this work and would like to have more opportunities for engagement in the future. Further, it is clear that many respondents feel an affiliation to their district council and there has been a general upturn in the level of engagement, evidenced by similar

engagements launched around the same time period. This could be attributed to residents feeling a stronger sense of community and local resilience since the Covid-19 pandemic and a greater degree of time being spent on-line. As part of our engagement residents and stakeholders were asked if they would like to be added to our consultation databases and a link for them to sign up to hear more from us was included. They were also given the opportunity to discuss the Corporate Plan development by contacting the Insight and Policy Manager directly.

- It is of note that 92% of the respondents identified themselves as individuals or members of the public, with 4% of respondents identified as staff. It is important to recall that the council did have plans to have focussed staff drop-ins at Milton Park, Cornerstone and the Beacon for staff to discuss the Corporate Plan 2020-24. These could not be held due to restrictions from the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst 4% is a low proportion of staff; it should be recognised that staff may have responded to the survey and identified themselves as individuals living or working in the district and answered in that capacity.
- The survey analysis will help to make improvements to the high-level themes and content. There is a lot of rich information which can inform the next stage of the Corporate Plan 2020-24 after it is formally adopted. There will be a year 1, 2 and 3 delivery plan which will set out more detailed information on how the council will deliver the commitments within the Plan and further work will also take place to develop the councils performance management framework that will monitor the progress of delivery.

Based on the output from the engagement, the recommendations were put forward to Cabinet and Full Council for consideration. The feedback from the engagement was also reviewed by our Scrutiny Committee. All recommendations were agreed. A table of the outcomes of these recommendations, including Cabinet comments, can be found at Appendix G.

The **recommendations** from the output of the engagement are summarised below.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider reviewing the vision for Vale of White Horse District Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24 with thought given to incorporating some of the alternative wording put forward and refining it's focus and length.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider prioritising a project, as part of Theme 6, Working in an Open and Inclusive Way, under programme 6.2 *We will increase meaningful engagement and communication with everyone*. specifically, around increasing participation and engagement to ensure equality of representation in local democracy and decision making in the district.

RECOMMENDATION Consider increasing the prominence of Theme 6, Working in an Open and Inclusive Way in the Corporate Plan 2020-24 by structuring projects under this theme for delivery in year 1 of the Corporate Plan given this theme scored highly. This could lead to a strong base built on trust and openness, to help deliver priorities in other areas.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider how to re-emphasise the mandate for action on the Climate Emergency, given the high level of support for this theme.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider whether they would like to ask the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee to review their advice in respect of targets.

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet to consider including or increasing the prominence of active travel in the scope of the proposed project to develop an active communities strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet to consider including projects suggested such as creating a high-quality district-wide cycling/pedestrian network and publicising existing cycle and pedestrian routes through our communications channels.

RECOMMENDATION The Transformation Monitoring Group should review this report and feed in any relevant comments into the forthcoming transformation reviews.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider addressing within the Corporate Plan foreword the rationale for including Theme 4, Building Stable Finances as a standalone theme.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider and ensure that the development of the corporate performance management framework allows for active and open visibility and participation of decision-making. For example, investigate functionality to be able to “drill down” into data on how well the council is performing against its Corporate Plan 2020-24 programmes and projects and identify the relevant decision-makers who are accountable.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider more active promotion of council and committee meetings to the general public and make these events more accessible through the use of technology, online streaming and video recordings. Also consider more use of Plain English in communications, and info graphics to help illustrate complex topics or those with detail. Also consider using Easy Read for some communication.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider how to address and manage the strength of feeling around the topic of asset disposal as they take forward the Strategic Property Review.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider the development of an ongoing communications and engagement programme that frames the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and whilst the Plan is formally adopted in October 2020, explore the potential for a commitment to an ongoing engagement as detailed delivery planning begins.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to consider how to engage more effectively and involve staff in the development of the detailed delivery planning of the Corporate Plan 2020-24. Further consideration should also be given on how best to engage with staff that were not based at Milton Park, before the Covid-19 pandemic, as almost all staff respondents (96%) were once based at Milton Park. Consideration should also be given to innovative ways to engage and involve staff in detailed delivery planning whilst working remotely.

RECOMMENDATION Cabinet to ensure that this report and specifically the comments, ideas and project suggestions are reviewed in full by each service area as part of future service planning along with other relevant information to inform project delivery planning in order to allow the council to work with the insight the survey gives us and prioritise/sequence/target projects that are favourable in the public mind.

RECOMMENDATION The findings of this engagement exercise are shared with our key Oxfordshire partners, especially where comments received are in respect of responsibilities that are outside of the district councils influence. A short summary document could be sent to Oxfordshire councils, businesses, community groups and towns and parishes with information specifically of interest to these groups. Drawing attention to the engagement findings actively in the spirit of working in an open and inclusive way.

BACKGROUND TO THE ENGAGEMENT

A new Corporate Plan for the period 2020-2024 is needed to create a vision and priorities for the council. We are working in partnership with a variety of stakeholders, public, private and the community and voluntary sector, as well as staff and councillors, to help build a better plan.

A survey asked those living and working in the district to have a say in what's most important for Vale of White Horse District Council to focus on. Councillors identified six main themes for what they feel are the most important areas they need to focus on.

The six suggested themes are:

Theme 1: Providing the homes people need

Theme 2: Tackling the Climate Emergency

Theme 3: Building Healthy Communities

Theme 4: Building Stable Finances

Theme 5: Working in Partnership

Theme 6: Working in an Open and Inclusive Way

We asked for views about these themes to ensure that the district remains a great place to live for years to come. The responses will help councillors finalise their mission statement, known as a Corporate Plan. The plan will enable them to focus the councils' work on what they and those living and working in the districts believe will make the district a better place for future generations.

Covid-19 has changed the way many of us view our priorities for ourselves and those around us. It gave greater importance to finding out what those living and working in the district think about our plans for the future, to make sure Vale of White Horse is the district our communities want it to be.

ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

A summary of the engagement and reporting methodology is below; full details are available at Appendix B.

A total of 4,302 email notifications were sent to a wide range of internal and external stakeholders and contacts to provide a link to a video of Councillors summarising this engagement and each theme, along with a link to the survey and details of how to comment. The email notification was issued through the councils' online engagement system SmartSurvey. A copy of the email notification can be found at Appendix C;

122 letters were issued to those consultees who opted in for postal correspondence, with details of how to obtain a hard copy of the survey. Vale of White Horse district councillors and staff were informed through internal communications.

A focused online survey, paper comment form and Easy Read versions of the survey offered participants opportunity to indicate how important they consider each of the six themes and their corresponding illustrative projects to be and comment on each theme in a free text box. A copy of the survey can be found at Appendix D.

A press release was issued on the engagement launch date, and social media messages (Twitter and Facebook) posted during the engagement period to further publicise and encourage wide participation from the public. We didn't collect post code data from respondents and will consider doing this in future engagements as this information can be helpful when looking at views of respondents in local areas.

A four-week engagement period was given for submitting responses between 16 July and 13 August 2020. We had to tailor our original engagement approach and our plans to engage more widely due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions. The engagement was carried out in conformity with our public engagement charter¹.

A total of 773 completed responses were received, one of these was an Easy Read paper version. 426 people looked at the survey but didn't answer any of the questions. Facebook received 6,474 views and Twitter 1,913 views during the engagement period.

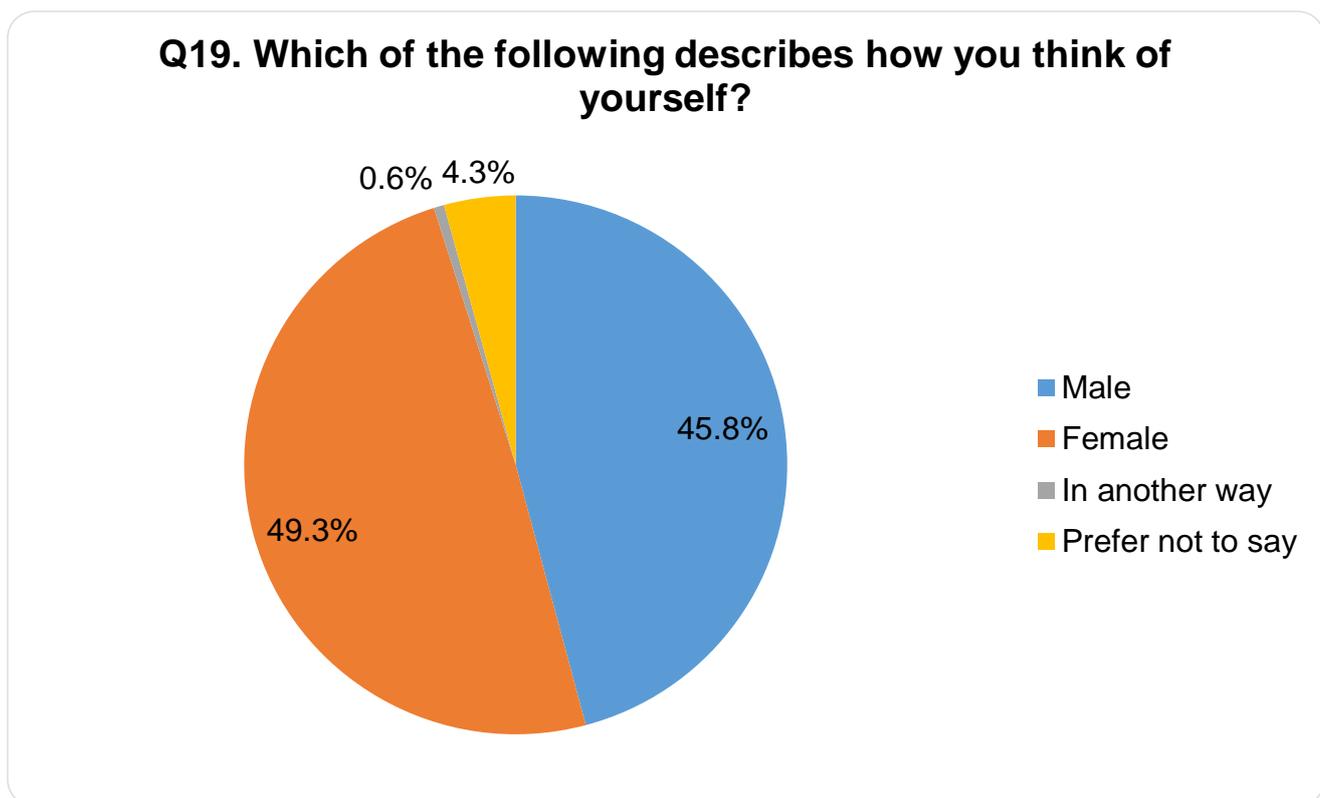
A total of 2,471 comments were received. Most of the comments contained several remarks or points within them and, where this is the case, each comment or point has been summarised individually for analysis purposes. Therefore, the total number of actual comments received is much higher. A summary of the comments is included in this report. Any personal information supplied to us within the comments that could identify anyone has been redacted and will not be shared or published in the report. Some spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors in the original comments were corrected in this report; a full list of unedited comments can be found at Appendix H.

¹ <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/about-the-council/get-in-touch/consultations/>

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

To understand whether survey respondents are representative of the population and how different cohorts maybe affected by the themes, projects and actions proposed, a range of questions were asked to capture demographic information.

The data shows that respondents were almost equally split between males (46%) and females (49%), with 4% preferring not to say and 0.6% identifying themselves 'in another way'. The higher proportion of female respondents is representative of the wider population, where they form a slightly bigger group than males.² Therefore, there is a similar response to this engagement from males and females meaning that they are fairly accurately represented in the data.



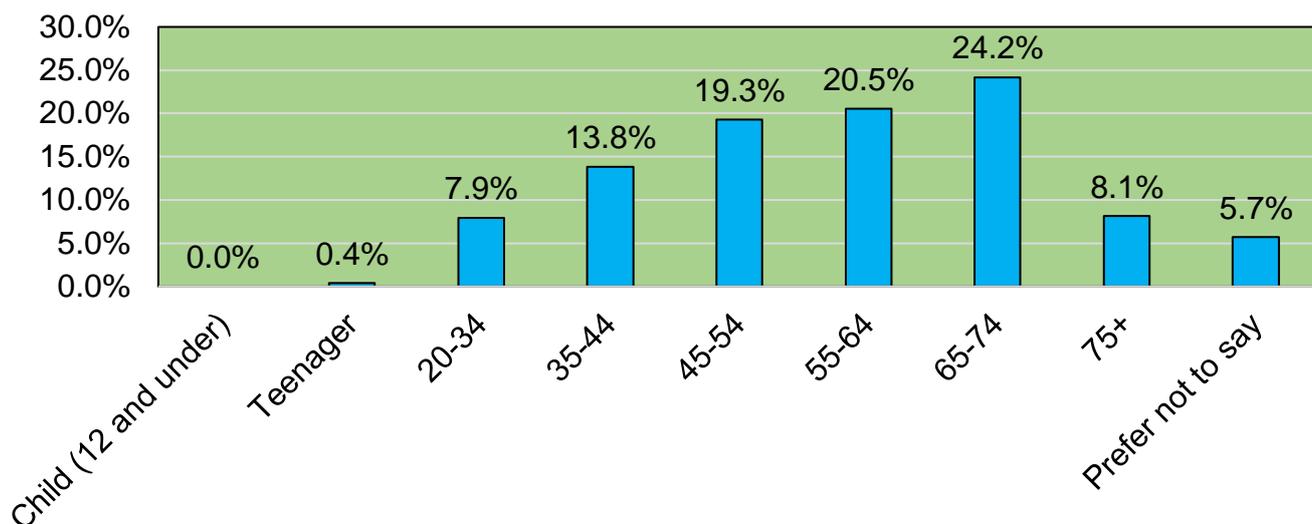
With regards to age groups, older cohorts formed a bigger proportion of total respondents than younger ones. More specifically, those aged 65-74 and 55-64 years old constituted 24% and 21% of the sample respectively, against 14% of those aged 35-44 and 8% of those aged 20-34. Respondents under 20 years old formed only 0.4% of the total.

This is not reflective of the wider population in the Vale, where residents aged 65-74 and 55-64 form 13 and 11% of the total respectively, whilst those aged 20-34 and under 20 form 17% and 9% of the total.³ The 35-44 age group is fairly represented in the survey, with it forming 13% of the population.

² Source: UK mid-year population estimates 2019/20, ONS.

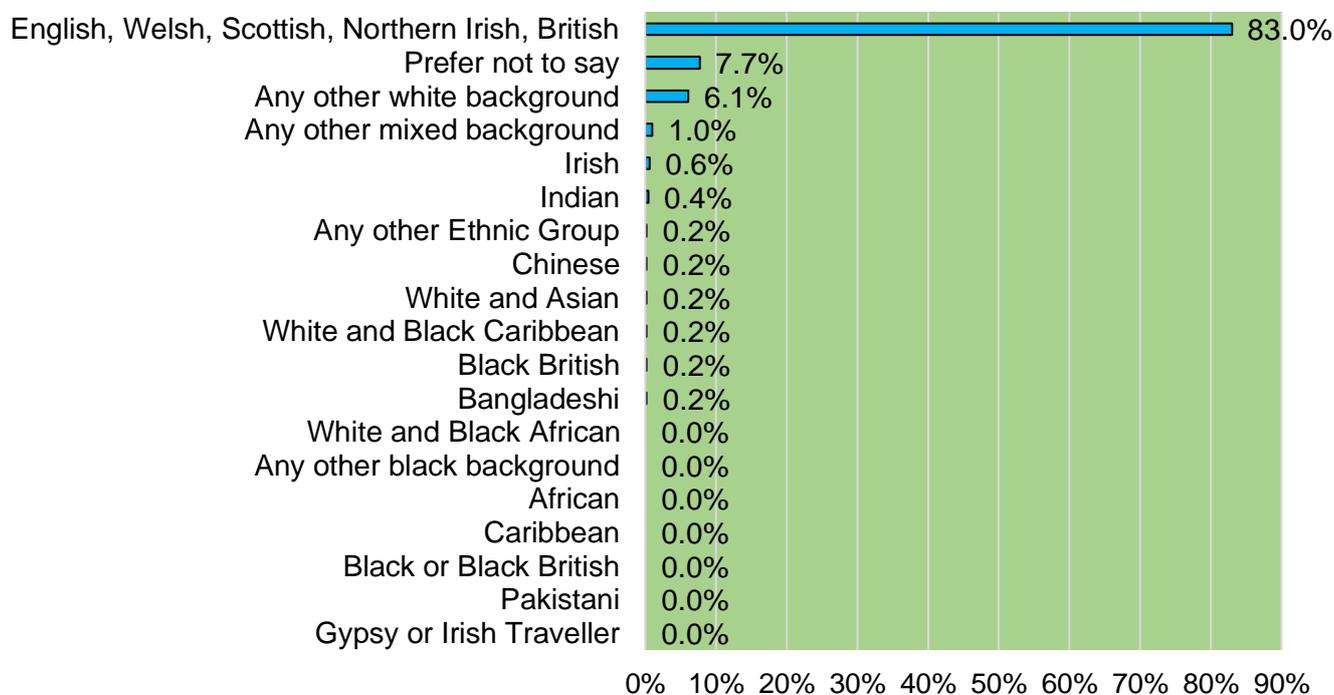
³ Source: UK mid-year population estimates 2019/20, ONS.

Q20. How old are you?



As for respondents' ethnicity, 83% were White British, whilst 6% were White with any other background, and 0.6% Irish. 1% reported a mixed ethnicity and almost 8% preferred not to answer. These proportions seem to reflect well the wider population, where White residents with British background form 89% of the total, whilst White with any other background and Irish form 4 and 0.8% respectively.⁴ Finally, Vale residents with mixed ethnicity form 1% of the population.

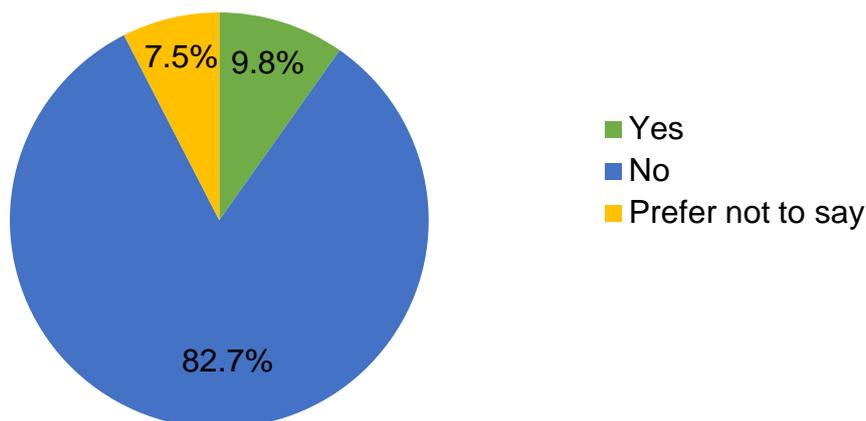
Q21. What is your ethnic group? Please tick one box only.



⁴ Source: 2011 Census, ONS.

Most respondents (83%), said their day to day activities were not limited by health problems or disability lasting over 12 months while 10% said these did affect their daily life. This again represents a good account of the wider district’s population, where 86% report no limitations due to health problems or disability, and 14% do face limitations due to health problems or disability.⁵

Q22. Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more?



To help us to better understand responses to this engagement and see if we are reaching a wide variety of people, we asked responders demographic questions. We also asked if they live in the district, work in the district or visit the district (e.g. to shop or see family/friends). Responders could choose more than one answer to this question, so when reporting the data, the percentages will not add up to 100. For example, a responder could live and work in the district so they will have chosen both of these options.

The vast majority of respondents live in the Vale of White Horse (92%), whilst nearly 11% live elsewhere but come to the district to shop or visit family and friends. Just less than a third said they work in the district (31%). For the 4% of those who said they have a different type of connection to the district and answered “other”, 40% of these used to live or work in the Vale.

Finally, most of those who responded to the survey did so as individual members of the public (88%), followed by district councils’ officers (4%). County or town parish councillors/officers, representatives of local businesses and community groups each made up 2% of the total.

Responders were asked to provide the name of the business / organisation, community group or council they were representing. 69 responses were received. Comments in italics in brackets are provided for clarification. All responses were received once, unless otherwise indicated. The list below does not include ‘not applicable’ and ‘none’ responses.

⁵ Source: 2011 Census, ONS.

- Vale of White Horse District Council x 6
- S&V (*South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils*) x 3
- Faringdon Town Council x 2
- Letcombe Regis Parish Council x 2
- Retired individual x 2
- I run Nice Tree Films and I am also a resident
- Aquobex
- Faringdon town F.C (*Football Club*)
- Maymessy CIC (*Community Interest Company*)
- Kennington Parish Council
- A Helping Hand Grove and Wantage
- Not applicable, simply a concerned citizen
- Blewbury Parish Council
- Not representing anyone
- Various Arts Organisations in Wantage
- Wantage Independent Advice Centre
- AbiBinit! (*Litter Picking Initiative*)
- Church
- I am a member of The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society, an excellent organisation
- Drayton
- Didcot
- South Oxfordshire Council
- Myself
- Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire
- Chaco Limited
- All Saints' church Faringdon
- Abingdon
- Fat face WANTAGE
- Shrivenham
- Highways England
- Farcycles
- Stanford in the Vale Parish Council
- The Canal & River Trust
- Cumnor Parish Council
- Fork Handles Golf
- Parish councillors cannot 'represent' the views of their councils unless approved by the council. They work under corporate responsibility rules
- Abingdon St. Helen's Without
- None. Just my family
- Zerotechnology.co.uk
- Alan Drury Architects
- The Woodland Trust
- North
- Hinksey Parish Council

- East Hanney Parish Council
- The British Horse Society
- Wilts and Berks Canal Trust
- Response on behalf of Uffington Parish Council
- Shrivenham Neighbourhood Plan Group
- Wantage and Grove Campaign Group
- North Hinksey Parish Council and the North Hinksey Parish Neighbourhood Plan Team
- My Life My Choice - Abingdon Group

Full demographic data can be found at Appendix E.

KEY FINDINGS – QUANTITATIVE DATA

The key quantitative findings from the consultation are summarised below.

Respondents were not required to answer all of the questions. The only question that was required to be answered in the online survey asked in what capacity the responder was replying to the survey had the option of ticking 'other'.

The survey provided an opportunity to make comments and suggestions on each of the six themes, tell us how important they consider each one to be, comment on the proposed programmes and example projects and draft vision, and make suggestions or any other comments on the draft Corporate Plan themes.

There were 773 responses to the survey. This type of online engagement was a new approach for the council in developing their Corporate Plan and the number of responses far exceeded our expectations.

How much do you agree or disagree with the vision for Vale of White Horse District Council's Corporate plan?

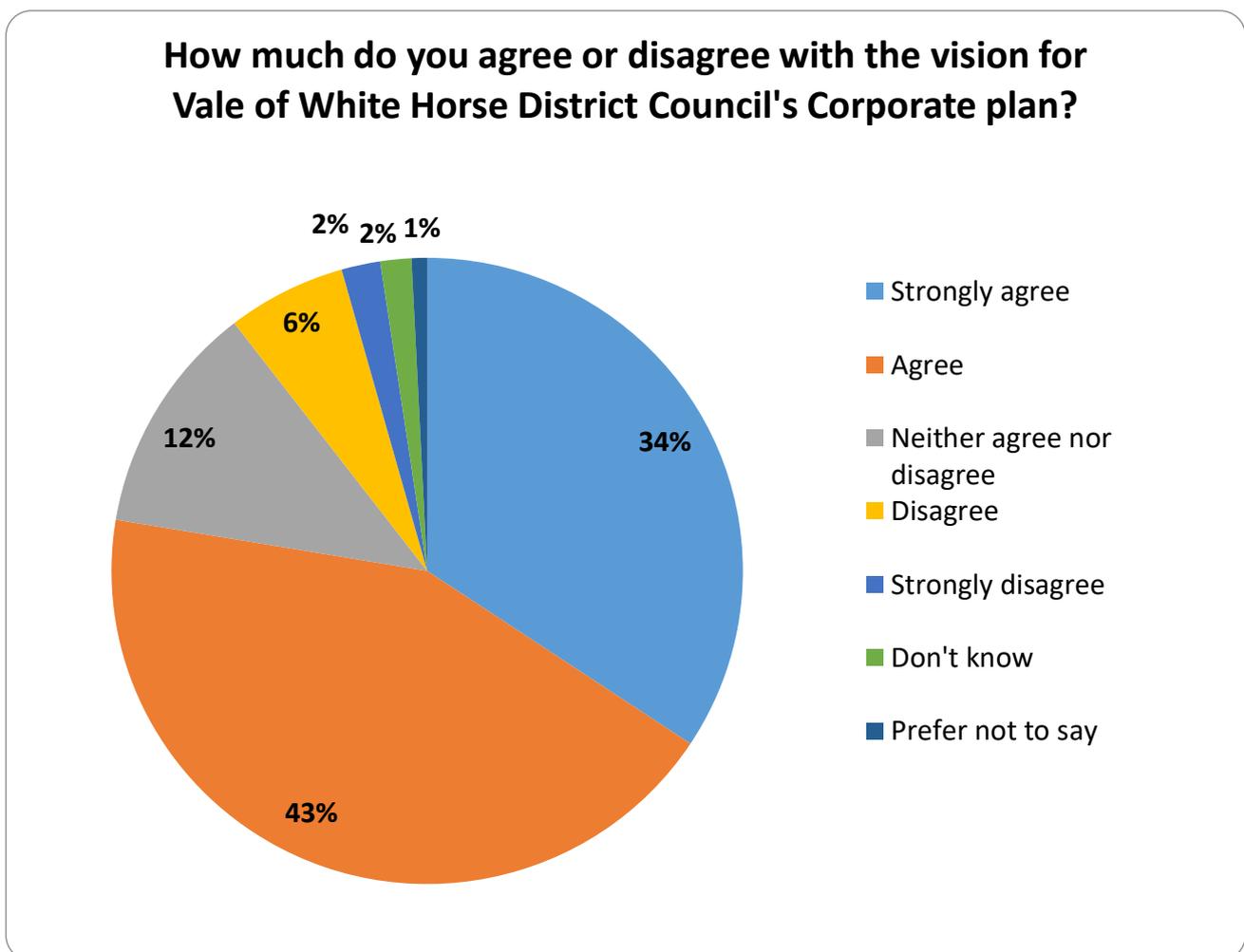
Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with the proposed vision. The vision for the Vale of White Horse Council's Corporate Plan is as follows:

'Vale of White Horse District Council aims to help build and support thriving local communities, where everyone can enjoy the opportunity to live a happy and fulfilling life. We will do all we can to contribute to making that a reality in the Vale within the ecological constraints of our physical environment on planet earth, and we will ensure that our council and our district play their part in tackling the Climate Emergency.'

755 responses were received to this question and it was answered by 98% of survey respondents.

78% of participants agree with the vision statement, answering either 'strongly agree' or 'agree'. 8% disagree, answering either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree', and 12% neither agree nor disagree. The remaining 3% answered with either don't know or prefer not to say.

Nearly half of those responding to this question, 328, also provided comments on the proposed vision statement. A summary of the comments received is included in the qualitative section of this report.



For each of the proposed six themes in the corporate plan, please tell us how important you consider each one to be.

Question 3 of the feedback survey asked respondents to rate the relative importance of each of the six themes by assigning them a score between one and five, with one being the least important and five the most important.

This question was optional and was answered by 688 out of 773 survey respondents (89%).

Overall, the survey output tells us most respondents agreed with all six of the priorities selected by Councillors and considered all six of them to be important to some degree.

More specifically, all themes achieved an average score greater than three, meaning most respondents deemed them relevant and hence assigned them high scores rather than low scores. See table below.

Proposed themes in the Corporate Plan in order of relative importance:



The best scoring theme, the one that achieved the highest average score, was Theme 3, Building Healthy Communities (3.91), followed by Theme 2, Tackling the Climate Emergency (3.82).

Only a little distance separates these two themes from the third and the fourth best scoring ones: Theme 6, Working in an Open and Inclusive Way (3.72), and Theme 4, Building Stable Finances (3.62).

Finally, the themes that obtained the lowest average scores relative to the others were Theme 1, Providing the Homes People Need (3.22), and Theme 5, Working in Partnership (3.19).

Although all themes received consistently fairly high scores, with the difference between the top and the bottom priority being less than a point, respondents seem to attribute greater importance to the improvement of health levels across the district and climate change, than to themes relating to housing and partnership work.

The high relevance assigned to Theme 6, Working in an Open and Inclusive Way, suggests that respondent's value honesty and answerability in a significant way.

It is interesting to note that Theme 3, Building Healthy Communities, is the best scoring theme and also presents the second lowest standard deviation⁶. Most respondents deemed Building Healthy Communities to be the most important theme relative to the others.

Conversely, respondents don't agree on the level of relative importance of two of the themes - Theme 1 (Providing the Homes People Need) and Theme 2 (Tackling the Climate Emergency). This is shown by the high values of the standard deviation, which indicates that respondents don't agree with the level of importance of a theme, with their answers falling around the extremes of the scale – either very important or not very important.

⁶ The standard deviation indicates how close responses are to the average, with low values of this measure indicating that respondents tended to agree on the rate of importance of a theme and therefore submitted similar answers, and high values of the standard deviation indicating that respondents tended to disagree on the level of importance of a theme.

KEY FINDINGS – QUALITATIVE DATA

The survey allowed responders to provide comments to the suggested vision. A range of different comments and suggestions were made, and a summary of the key findings is below.

Participants were also asked to provide feedback on the priority themes, programmes and example projects being proposed to deliver the plan. Respondents were given the opportunity to give suggestions for any other programmes and projects to help the council achieve each theme. General comments were also sought on each the theme and respondents asked to state if there anything missing from the theme or if it needs to be expanded on. 2,083 comments were received. This opportunity allowed respondents to give reasons behind their answers to the previous questions.

The opportunity to suggest any other programmes or example projects that may be missing from the themes, and to provide any other comments about the proposed themes attracted a wide range of feedback, summarised below.

Some spelling, grammatical and punctual errors in the original comments have been corrected in this report. A full unedited list of all comments raised can be found at Appendix H.

Do you have any comments on Vale of White Horse District Council's vision?

328 responses were received in relation to this question. Responses differed in their detail and content, but some key themes and topics reoccurred throughout.

17% of responses highlighted that the vision statement was too wide, idealistic and some measures were needed to improve it. Many commented that the vision statement was vague and lacked a local focus. Respondents also felt that it could be more to the point with measurable goals included, or even have less text so it's more like a strapline. There were also views around the wording needing to be more forthright and suggestions were made to use stronger phrases such as '*we will*' rather than '*we are committed to*'.

11% of participants provided comments relating to the importance of providing adequate infrastructure to support growth – including better cycle and walking infrastructure. Within these topics there were strong concerns that too many houses are being built across the district without the proper infrastructure being in place or the infrastructure not being fit for purpose. Many suggested that the council should concentrate more on improving foot and cycle paths and use the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown experience to plan for effective traffic reduction.

10% of respondents were concerned about whether the declarations made within the vision statement could actually be deliverable. Respondents wondered if the implementation of the ideals set out in the vision could be achieved by the council in the timeframe allowed and that more than just words were needed. There was a suggestion that the council needed to work within its limits of what it could realistically achieve and to focus on work within its remit.

Comments were also raised about the importance of the vision and all of the work the council does being led by the environment and taking action in the face of the climate emergency. Some thought that the climate should be at the forefront of every decision taken by the council and that tackling climate change needed to be done in a joined up and properly thought out

way. Responders also felt that there is a conflict between managing for growth and protecting the environment. Specifically, participants thought that the declaration of a climate emergency by the council is not compatible with house building, especially when houses are being built in the countryside and involve destruction of habitat.

There was agreement for the vision by some responders who found it admirable. Some felt that the way it was worded made it hard to disagree with as it was considered to be an acceptable statement.

4% of respondents made comments around ensuring that the council focuses on delivering basic services such as ensuring sound finances are in place, ahead of environmental initiatives. Also mentioned by respondents was the need for enhancing the quality of life in local communities; and treating towns and parishes across the district more fairly. Specific wording suggestions for the vision were offered by participants to help improve content and clarity of the vision statement.

Frequency of comments received on the Vale of White Horse District Council's vision

Summary of comment type	Frequency
Too wide / idealistic / measures needed	72
Deliverable?	44
Environment and climate emergency should lead	41
Conflict of growth and environment	41
Agree	39
Infrastructure needed	29
Suggesting a specific wording change	26
Cycle and walking infrastructure needed	16
Basics and efficiency ahead of Climate Change actions / environmental initiatives	15
Quality of life / community	14
Be fair and equal to all towns and parishes	13
Action suggestion	13
Love of nature	12
Boost economy	11
Healthy and happy reference needed	7
Feedback for district council	7
Role model council	6
Role model individual	2
Science and technology	1
Communication with residents	1
More for young people	1

Theme 1: Providing the homes people need

Do you have any other suggestions of programmes and projects we could include to help achieve this theme?

303 responses were received in relation to this question. While there was a great degree of variation in the detail and content of the comments, certain topics and themes reoccurred throughout.

Over a fifth of respondents (22%) believed that the Vale should do more in relation to affordable housing. Many wish to see the Council develop a genuine definition of affordable which reflects the market conditions of the local area. Further, they want developers to be mandated to provide a fixed percentage of 'genuinely affordable' homes on sites – with strict enforcement measures. Some suggested the creation of a preferred developers list for those who had met the rules and requirements.

Just under 17% of respondents suggested that the Vale should introduce strict requirements in relation to energy efficiency. The majority wanted the Council to ensure that all new housing met the highest possible standards with solar panels, grey water systems and heat pumps fitted as standard. In addition, support should be provided for the retrofitting of existing properties to ensure that they were as energy efficient as possible. While less frequently mentioned, participants also wished to see the Vale introduce design and quality standards for new housing (9%). Many stated that the current arrangements allowed developers to build sub-standard housing that failed to meet the needs of residents e.g. in terms of both indoor and outdoor space.

Around 14% of respondents mentioned the importance of providing the necessary infrastructure for new developments. Many wished to see a strict requirement that promised facilities such as schools and roads were provided at the same time as housing – thereby, minimising any infrastructure deficit.

Another popular suggestion from the survey related to the mixture of housing provided in the Vale. Responders wanted the council to do more in respects of the types of homes being built within the district. They argued that more should be done to ensure that a variety of types (starter homes etc) and tenures (social, affordable rent, part ownership) were provided. Further, some wished to see much more being done to encourage people to down-size through the supply of more suitable accommodation e.g. bungalows.

9% of respondents also mentioned the need for the Vale to do more regarding the re-development of existing, empty properties. Many suggested that the council should investigate the possibility of re-purposing suitable buildings in urban areas to provide residential properties to meet need and could also help in the revitalisation of town centres.

Possible programmes and projects suggested by respondents, include:

- Developing a genuine definition of affordable housing which reflects the market conditions of the local area.
- Introducing tougher enforcement in relation to affordable housing quotas.
- Introducing strict energy efficiency and design requirements to guarantee that all new housing is fit for purpose.
- Ensuring that infrastructure projects are delivered concurrently with new housing developments.

- Mandating that all new developments within the Vale provide a variety of homes in respects of both type and tenure.

Please use the space below to tell us if you have any other comments on this theme. Is there anything missing from this theme or does it need to be expanded on?

240 responses were received in relation to this question. While they differed widely in detail, content and context, some key themes and phrases frequently reoccurred.

Just under a quarter (24%) of respondents raised concerns around the issue of affordability. The overwhelming majority of these believe that house prices within the Vale are out of the reach of most people and that the current definition of affordability is unfit for purpose. Many argued that young, local people are being forced out of the area by their inability to get on the housing ladder and that this could have longer-term social and economic implications.

The interconnected issue of the mixture of housing also featured in the top ten issues raised by responders to the survey (9%). Most of these responses raised the issue of the perceived imbalance between starter homes and four/five-bedroom properties on new developments. The consensus of opinion was that developers were maximising profits by building large homes for commuters rather than providing houses that reflected the needs of the local area.

Around 17% of respondents mentioned the issue of infrastructure in relation to new developments. Many highlighted their concerns that current infrastructure provision had failed to keep pace with the level of housing development and that fixing this deficit should be the priority. Furthermore, they were also worried that any new developments would make the existing situation worse – many suggested that the requisite infrastructure for new developments should be constructed prior to any homes being built. The related issue of the provision of local services, amenities and facilities also featured prominently in responses.

Responders to the survey also highlighted the issue of over/inappropriate development. Most believed that too many houses had been built within the district and that many of these sites were in the wrong places (away from facilities, lacking public transport and so on). Many of these respondents also wished to see greater protection for the Green Belt, with most demanding a moratorium on any further development on Green Belt while brownfield sites remained unused.

Respondents also focused upon the connected issues of build quality, design and environmental standards. The majority wished to see the council set the highest possible standards regarding these issues. Many focused upon the perceived poor design/quality of new housing developments (*non-descript boxes*) and suggested that more should be done to improve the current levels. Further, if the Vale was serious about meeting its climate change goals, all new developments should have to meet the highest environmental standards with solar panels, wastewater recycling and heat pumps being used widely.

Around 11% of responses also mentioned the issue of enforcement in relation to new housing. Many believed that the Vale could do more to ensure that developers stuck to their original agreements in terms of providing affordable housing and infrastructure. The perception amongst many was that, once planning permission was granted, builders often '*run rings around planners*', go back on what they had promised and that the council does very little to

stop them. Responders are saying a firmer line needs to be taken with housing developers over design quality, build quality and keeping their promises. Developers are very good at promising all sorts of things in order to get planning permission, but don't then always deliver. Design quality is a particular problem.

Theme 2: Tackling the Climate Emergency

Do you have any other suggestions of programmes and projects we could include to help achieve this theme?

274 responses were received in relation to this question. While there was a great degree of variation in the detail and content of the comments, certain topics and themes reoccurred throughout.

Just under a quarter of respondents (24%) believed that the Vale should be increasing the provision of cycling and pedestrian routes. Many wish to see the council create a substantial network of interconnected, segregated paths between the towns and villages of the district. Furthermore, they want these to be easily accessible and to go to places that residents want to cycle/walk too (town centres, business parks). In addition, the council should be looking to create/establish transport hubs where these new routes seamlessly interconnect with the public transport network.

A cluster of respondents 22% suggested that the Vale should introduce strict new environmental standards for new housing developments. The majority wished to see all new housing be fitted with solar panels as standard – with many questioning why this was not already the case.

Around 14% of participants highlighted the importance of public transport in reducing car journeys and asked that the council do more in this respect. Many want to see the Vale do more to improve the bus network, especially in rural areas, where cycling and walking is not a viable option. In addition, a number of responses highlighted the issue of a new station at Grove/Wantage and wanted the council to vigorously pursue the delivery of this scheme.

Another popular suggestion from the survey related to the creation/restoration of natural habitats. Responders wanted to see the council plant more wildflowers on open spaces, reduce the cutting of grass and hedges on public land, and introduce a tree planting programme. Bolder suggestions included the creation of community woodlands on the edge of the Vale's towns/ villages and investigating the possibility of establishing a sizeable new country park within the district.

Just under 7% of respondents proposed that the Vale should increase its support for renewable energy projects. While some suggested incentivising small-scale domestic and community projects, others highlighted larger schemes such as solar farms, these having the potential to generate revenue for the council.

Possible programmes and projects suggested by respondents, therefore, include:

- Creating a high-quality district-wide cycling/pedestrian network
- Introducing strict environmental standards for all new housing developments

- Campaigning for the introduction/re-introduction of bus routes – especially in rural areas
- Working with partners to ensure the delivery of a new railway station at Grove/Wantage
- Establishing a district-wide tree planting programme.
- Providing support for community based renewable energy schemes.
- Investigating the possibilities for pursuing large-scale renewable energy projects.

Please use the space below to tell us if you have any other comments on this theme. Is there anything missing from this theme or does it need to be expanded on?

184 responses were received in relation to this question. While they differed widely in detail, content and context, some key themes and phrases frequently reoccurred.

13% of respondents raised the issue of increased cycling and walking provision. Many highlighted their reluctance to utilise these alternative methods of transport because of safety concerns due to inadequate segregation from cars and a fear of speeding vehicles.

A significant number of participants also suggested that the information around the issue of tackling the climate emergency was too vague. While the majority agreed with the aspiration of reducing carbon emissions, most wanted further details and specifics about how this was to be achieved in practice.

7% of respondents raised concerns over the practicalities of Vale addressing this issue. Although they were mostly supportive of the motives behind addressing the issue of climate change, many questioned whether a district council could make a significant impact and, therefore, suggested that this matter could be better addressed at a regional and national level.

In contrast, 7% of participants believed that the Vale should have set more ambitious targets in relation to the climate emergency. Many believed that the aspiration of becoming a carbon neutral district by 2045 failed to reflect the gravity of the situation and that, therefore, the council should reassess its goals. Furthermore, a contrast was drawn between the Vale's climate emissions targets and the more ambitious ones set by South Oxfordshire (maybe add their reduction target).

Another popular topic raised by the survey was the issue of higher environmental standards for new developments. Many people wished to see all new buildings comply with the most stringent requirements in terms of energy efficiency and sustainability. Moreover, while most still expressed scepticism regarding the practicality of building new homes while trying to address the climate emergency, there was a willingness to accept some amount of housing if its environmental impact was minimised.

Respondents also focused upon the interconnected issues of biodiversity, open space and the Green Belt. Many expressed disappointment that there was not a firm commitment to preserving and protecting the green belt as part of the climate emergency work. They argued that these areas provided a natural space that should be protected providing a habitat for wildlife, acts as green lungs for the district's urban areas, preserves the distinct character of communities and is a place for outdoor recreation and leisure. In addition, several responders

also wished to see more done to create, preserve and enhance open spaces in and around urban areas.

Theme 3: Building Healthy Communities

Do you have any other suggestions of programmes and projects we could include to help achieve this theme?

271 responses were received in relation to this question. While there was a great degree of variation in the detail and content of the comments, certain topics and themes reoccurred throughout.

42% of respondents believed that Vale should be doing more to increase the provision of high-quality cycling and walking infrastructure. Many wish to see the council create a substantial network of interconnected, segregated paths between the towns and villages of the district. In addition, they also wish to see greater efforts made to promote the routes that currently exist – some participants highlighted their experiences of discovering new paths during lockdown and believe that the council should be doing more to inform residents of the current levels of provision. Further suggestions of how to encourage people to walk and cycle included the introduction of no-car Sundays, a reduction in speed limits and the creation of a district Active Travel Strategy.

9% of participants suggested that the Vale should do more to protect and enhance green spaces within the district. In addition, respondents also want the council to increase the provision of open and green spaces with the district. Many are asking the council to do more to improve the quality of existing parks and open areas to ensure that they are welcoming to visitors. Moreover, some wish to see them utilised for health-based community events such as outdoor exercise classes and park runs. Several wish to see additional requirements placed upon developers to provide suitable green spaces when new housing is built.

Another popular suggestion from the survey relates to the provision of leisure facilities within the district. Many respondents within the district wish to see an increase in the number of leisure centres, swimming pools and other sports facilities across the Vale. Further, they want these facilities to be accessible and affordable to all members of the community – several suggested discounted/free memberships of gyms and fitness classes – and for opening hours to be increased.

Interlinked to both the provision of leisure facilities and the enhancement of green spaces, 7% of respondents suggested that the council should install more outdoor gym equipment across the district. Many argued that this would help people to undertake physical exercise within their own communities and would be accessible to everyone.

Possible programmes and projects suggested by respondents, therefore, include:

- Creating a high-quality district-wide cycling/pedestrian network.
- Publicising existing cycle and pedestrian routes.
- Developing a district Active Travel Strategy.
- Working with partners to investigate reducing speed limits in certain areas.

- A green space audit of provision with the aim of increasing, protecting and enhancing provision.
- The installation of more outdoor gym equipment throughout the district.

Please use the space below to tell us if you have any other comments on this theme. Is there anything missing from this theme or does it need to be expanded on?

131 responses were received in relation to this question. While they differed widely in detail, content and context, some key themes and phrases frequently reoccurred.

Just under a fifth of respondents (20%) raised the issue of cycling and walking provision in relation to healthy communities. Many highlighted concerns regarding safety in relation to motor vehicles as a key reason why they were reluctant to utilise these alternative methods of travel. Further, some also noted that existing paths and cycle ways were in a relatively poor state of repair and, therefore, were sceptical regarding the long-term maintenance of any new or extended routes. The consensus was that increasing the proportion of people utilising active travel would not only have numerous mental and physical health benefits, but also help to address issues around air quality and climate change.

A significant number of participants, 7%, also suggested that the information around the theme of building healthy communities was vague. They were unsure about its exact meaning and the details of any of the programmes and projects underpinning this work. Moreover, many were sceptical about how the work in this area would be funded, and whether it fell under the responsibilities of a district council.

Respondents also raised the issue of what defines a community. Many highlighted a feature of community included a sense of space, belonging and the preservation of a distinct character. Some were very concerned that through inappropriate housing developments, places were losing their sense of community. Interconnected to this issue, many participants raised the importance of local groups in helping to deliver the concept of healthy communities. The necessity of working and supporting people and organisations immersed within their localities was regarded as a crucial element in helping to improve health outcomes across the district.

Another popular topic raised by the survey was the issue of local health services. Many wished to see an increase in the provision of GP surgeries and health centres based within communities.

Participants also wished to see a greater focus on healthy eating. Several responses noted the importance nutrition and, therefore, wished to see more done to educate and encourage residents to make good dietary choices. Some also suggested putting restrictions on fast-food outlets near schools.

Theme 4: Building Stable Finances

Do you have any other suggestions of programmes and projects we could include to help achieve this theme?

140 responses were received in relation to this question. While there was a great degree of variation in the detail and content of the comments, certain topics and themes reoccurred throughout.

A fifth of the respondents to this question wished to see the Vale undertake an in-depth review of its current services and processes to identify wasteful spending and inefficiencies. Many argued that the council was not spending responsibly and should learn to live within its means. Furthermore, it should embed a culture of continuous improvement and review to ensure that it continued to provide value for money.

9% of responders believed that the council should take a more proactive approach to income generation and commercialisation. The majority argued that the Vale should be looking at ways to ensure a consistent and sustainable long-term income streams. The consensus was that there should be a focus on green investment which provided value for the community.

Respondents also thought that the council should provide greater transparency in terms of its finances. Many thought that the amount of information currently provided was insufficient and opaque. They wished to see clear, easy-to-understand data which the average resident could understand. Interlinked to the need for greater transparency, participants also believed that the Vale should look to increase the level of community engagement and involvement in relation to its financial affairs.

Another popular suggestion from the survey related to Old Abbey House in Abingdon. People were upset that it had been left empty for several years and suggested that the council could utilise this asset to generate an income stream. They were, however, opposed to the idea of selling off the site for development.

Possible programmes and projects suggested by respondents, therefore, include:

- A review of current services and processes to identify waste and inefficiencies.
- The embedding of a culture of continuous improvement.
- The creation of a commercialisation and income generation strategy.
- Investigating the options for providing greater transparency in relation to financial and budgetary matters.
- Increasing community and resident engagement.
- Addressing the long-standing issue of Old Abbey House in Abingdon.

Please use the space below to tell us if you have any other comments on this theme. Is there anything missing from this theme or does it need to be expanded on?

97 responses were received in relation to this question. While they differed widely in detail, content and context, some key themes and phrases frequently reoccurred.

15% of respondents raised the issue of waste and inefficiency within the council. Many believed that the Vale should focus on addressing these issues before looking to raise

revenue, increase charges etc. Several participants suggested that the council should aim to act in a more commercial, business like manner when it came to its financial affairs.

Around 14% of the responses suggested that the current information around the theme of building stable finances was too vague. They wished to have more information and details about how the council was going to meet its aspirations in this area.

Participants also focused on the issue of transparency and accountability. They wished to see the council provide more information for local residents and for there to be clear lines of accountability in relation to financial decisions.

While many respondents recognised the need for the Vale to look at ways of generating additional revenue and income, they were, nevertheless, concerned about the costs of increased charges to residents and businesses, such as from council tax, business rates or parking. Further, some questioned the financial wisdom regarding the disposal of assets. They suggested that this type of selling was a short-term solution to the financial challenges faced by the council and could actually be counterproductive.

Responders also questioned why this theme was necessary. They suggested that the council should have been taking these actions as a matter of course and wondered why Vale of White Horse had not done so. Particular concerns were raised about why the council had not already adopted the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) financial management code of practice.

Theme 5: Working in Partnership

Do you have any other suggestions of programmes and projects we could include to help achieve this theme?

131 responses were received in relation to this question. While there was a great degree of variation in the detail and content of the comments, certain topics and themes reoccurred throughout.

18% of respondents wished to see the Vale work more closely with community and voluntary groups. Many wanted the council to increase the level of support it provided for such organisations – this additional assistance did not, however, have to be financially based. Some also wished to see the Vale utilise this existing resource to help provide better outcomes for residents. The cooperative relationship between the council and many community and voluntary groups during the pandemic was cited as a potential example for future collaborations.

Interconnected to the proposal for increased working with community groups, many responders also highlighted the importance of the Vale providing more support and assistance for volunteers. Respondents wanted the council to work with existing organisations to help increase the number of people volunteering throughout the district. They also wished to see the Vale provide explicit backing for volunteers by showing that their work is valued.

Just under 14% of respondents believed that the Vale should be doing more to increase public involvement in their work. Many wished to see greater community participation in the decision-

making process with increased communication between the council and residents. Some also wished to see the council do more to engage with the community, utilising this resource to gain a greater understanding of what people in the area want – a few suggested the creation of formal groups and bodies to facilitate this process.

Another popular suggestion from the survey related to support for local businesses and SMEs (small and medium size enterprise). Respondents wished to see the council do more to support the local economy through reduced rents, financial support etc. Further, some wanted the Vale to increase its interactions with the SME business community through networking events and the possible creation of a business advisory group. A survey is launching in September aimed at businesses across the district to find out how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected them and how the council can support businesses as part of their Economic Recovery Plan.

Participants also thought that the council should be doing more to increase the level of partnership working with other local authorities. Many of the responses on this issue mentioned the issue of joining district and county councils together (called Unitary Council) and believed that the council should be investigating this possibility. Other responders mentioned the importance of working more closely with South Oxfordshire District Council on strategic cross-boundary issues – one response also highlighted the need to improve collaboration with Swindon Council due to its proximity to communities in the west of the district.

Possible programmes and projects suggested by respondents, therefore, include:

- An examination of the possibilities for increased collaboration between the council and community groups within the district.
- Investigating the possibility for increased engagement and community involvement in the work of the council.
- Working more closely with local businesses to support SMEs within the district.
- Investigating the options for improved partnership working with neighbouring local authorities.

Please use the space below to tell us if you have any other comments on this theme. Is there anything missing from this theme or does it need to be expanded on?

90 responses were received in relation to this question. While they differed widely in detail, content and context, some key themes and phrases frequently reoccurred.

12% of respondents raised the matter of public involvement. Many believed that the council should be doing more to involve residents and community groups in their work. They argued that the Vale should ensure that the collating the views of local people and organisations should form a key plank of this theme. Further, these interactions should have a meaningful impact on the deliberations and decisions of the council.

Interlinked to the concept of increased interactions between the council and community groups, were apprehensions regarding who would be involved in the process. Participants were worried that large and more established organisations would be given priority and that other smaller groups would be overlooked and unable to contribute. They, therefore, requested

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that, at a minimum, the Vale increases its level of communication with community groups and residents in order to ensure that the greatest spectrum of views and opinions were heard.

Respondents, while mostly welcoming the concept of partnership working, were, nevertheless, concerned about accountability and transparency. They wondered about how organisations and bodies would be held to account through the democratic process. Moreover, they highlighted the value of providing readily accessible information about the council's current and future partners.

Theme 6: Working in an Open and Inclusive Way

Do you have any other suggestions of programmes and projects we could include to help achieve this theme?

131 responses were received in relation to this question. While there was a great degree of variation in the detail and content of the comments, certain topics and themes reoccurred throughout.

37% of respondents mentioned the issue of transparency in decision-making. Many wished to see the council do more to provide more information to residents on important matters of interest. The perception was that decisions are taken behind closed doors without the public being involved. They, therefore, suggested that the Vale should do more to publicise council and committee meetings to the general public and make these events more accessible through the use of technology, streaming and video recordings. The interlinked issue of accountability also featured heavily amongst responses with many responders wanting there to be clearer lines of responsibility when it came to decisions and more opportunities to hold the council to account.

Over a fifth of responders (23%) wanted the council to do more to reach out to all members of the community. Various participants thought that the Vale did not do enough to connect with easily overlooked groups (the young, ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged). Engagement exercises were dominated by a small self-selecting group of people. Several respondents, therefore, proposed that the council investigate how to interact with all parts of the community.

Possible programmes and projects suggested by respondents, therefore, include:

- Utilising digital technology to make council and committee meetings more accessible.
- Investigating how to increase participation amongst wide range of audiences.

Please use the space below to tell us if you have any other comments on this theme. Is there anything missing from this theme or does it need to be expanded on?

91 responses were received in relation to this question. While they differed widely in detail, content and context, some key themes and phrases frequently reoccurred.

Just over 15% of respondents raised the matter of transparency. Many contended that the public were not presented with the full facts before decisions were taken – or a comprehensive

rationale afterwards. Some respondents argued that providing a clear account of why a particular course of action had been taken would give residents greater confidence in the decision-making process. Furthermore, such an instrument would provide a clearer line of accountability.

Participants were also sceptical over the council's ability to deliver on these goals. While most agreed with the sentiment of working in an open and inclusive manner, many were unconvinced that the Vale would actually deliver. They needed to be assured of the council's commitment by swift, firm and decisive action on this matter. Several were also unconvinced about how progress in relation to this theme would be measured.

Respondents also felt that the Vale could do more to meaningfully engage with residents. The majority of these suggested that the current processes were not adequate and that this created a disconnect between them and the council. They argued more should be done to increase the levels of engagement across the district. Further, several submissions also raised the related issue of the council's perceived inability to engage with specific communities for example those without the internet, economically disadvantaged, younger people. There was a suggestion that a self-selecting group of loud voices (middle-aged and middle-class) drowned out the opinions and views of other less involved members of the community. There were also concerns that moving towards a more internet-based approach to engagement could exacerbate this problem.

Interconnected to the issue of meaningful engagement, around 10% of responders emphasised the need for the council to heed the views and wishes of residents. The perception of many was that their opinions were disregarded and that decisions were imposed from above. Some were dubious of the value of the council's current engagement strategies, with many suggesting that they were tick-box exercises that merely had to be completed rather than a consequential interaction.

Anything else?

If you think any other themes or priorities are missing in the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan please use the space below to tell us. You can also use this space to make any other comments about the Corporate Plan.

60 responses were received in relation to this question. While they differed widely in detail, content and context, some key themes and phrases frequently reoccurred.

A quarter of respondents highlighted the importance of de-carbonising the district. While they recognised that the Vale had prioritised the climate emergency, they believed that the council should make this the underpinning thread for all council work.

20% of participants also wanted to see a greater focus upon preserving and improving the natural environment. Many wish to see the council more specifically address the issues of habitat loss, biodiversity and green spaces in both urban and rural areas.

Another popular topic raised in the survey was the issue of transport. Many responders wished to see improved public transport links across the district with frequent and reliable connections to places that people need to visit e.g. hospitals. Several commentators also raised the related issue of the state of the district's roads with frequent mentions of problems with potholes.

The connected issues of overpopulation and excessive building was raised by 15% per cent of respondents. The consensus was that too many houses, without the requisite infrastructure, had been built within the district and that it was fundamentally changing the character of the area. While there was a recognition that homes needed to be provided, many felt that there needed to be a fundamental change in how and where they were delivered.

12% of respondents also highlighted the importance of the district's market towns with specific issues being raised about the perceived lack of shops and facilities in Faringdon, and in Wantage the cited problems regarding the imbalance between the growth in population and the infrastructure of the town e.g. the postponed leisure centre. People wanted the council to concentrate on improving the retail, leisure and employment opportunities in and around these towns.

10% of responders also suggested that there should be more of a focus upon facilities and activities for young people across the district. Several comments highlighted a lack of specific amenities within their area for teenagers.

Respondents also mentioned the importance of creating communities. Many thought that the council needed to support the development of a sense of belonging and place – perhaps through the utilisation of unused public buildings as community hubs.

HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE ENGAGEMENT

This report shows the analysis of the comments received to the six priority themes and vision in the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 engagement survey. The Corporate Plan sets the strategic direction for the council and creates a vision and priorities for the councils' work for those living and working in the districts.

There were a variety of comments and responses, and although only the most frequently mentioned comments are explored further in this report, all comments received are taken into consideration and are included at Appendix H.

Where a response is needed to a specific comment or question raised in the engagement, a separate reply will be provided where possible.

A summary of findings is collated in the report and the two separate appendices documents and will be presented to council managers and Cabinet Members and will be used to inform the preparation of the final content for the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan. The Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020-2024 will be published, alongside this report and the appendices, on our [website](#), with the new corporate plan coming into effect from the date of publication.

The engagement highlighted that there is strong overall support for the draft themes and vision in the Corporate Plan. Following consideration of the comments received and the recommendations included with this report a table confirming the outcomes and action to be taken is included as Appendix G.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the consultation or the results presented in this report, please contact:

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To enquire about the council's work on the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024, please contact the Insight and Policy team:

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Appendices

The appendices to the Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 engagement report are in two separate documents. The appendices document can be found on the corporate plan page of our [website](#) alongside this engagement report and the corporate plan.

APPENDIX 1: A-G

APPENDIX A – BACKGROUND TO THE ENGAGEMENT

APPENDIX B – ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

APPENDIX C – ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

APPENDIX D – SURVEY

APPENDIX E – DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

APPENDIX F – QUANTITATIVE DATA

APPENDIX G – OUTCOMES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDIX 2: H

APPENDIX H – FULL LIST OF COMMENTS RECEIVED