

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report February 2018

£1.55 million available to boost our rural areas. Small businesses, community groups, farmers and foresters in rural areas can apply for LEADER grants of up to £10,000 towards projects to boost the rural economy. If you know of a project or business that could benefit visit the Oxfordshire LEADER website.

First prosecution against someone for housing fraud. On 30 January a woman living in a social housing property in Great Milton was convicted of making a fraudulent application - a tip-off had revealed that she already owned a three-bedroom house in Wales. Magistrates ordered her to pay £1,530 and SODC is working to recover the property so that it can be made available again on the housing register.

Advanced skills apprenticeship event. On Thursday 1st February over 90 people came along to meet key employers, including the UK Atomic Energy Authority and Reaction Engines, at an apprenticeships careers event at The Culham Science Centre. SODC hosted the event along with **Oxfordshire Advanced Skills**. Supporting businesses that are experiencing skills and employment issues is a key action in SODC's **Business and Innovation Strategy Action Plan**.

Neighbourhood Planning. The plan for Dorchester-on-Thames has passed its examination and is now proceeding to referendum. We will let you know when the referendum date has been set. The six-week publicity periods for both Benson and Watlington Neighbourhood Plans have finished and they are now being examined. Chalgrove, Warborough and Shillingford, and The Baldons have all submitted their plans. A six-week publicity period for each plan will begin in the next couple of weeks. The final consultation for Beckley and Stowood's Neighbourhood Plan is currently underway and will end on 24 February. You can find out details on all our neighbourhood plans on the SODC website

Local Plan update. During last year's Local Plan consultation, we received 2,616 comments from just over 800 individuals. We will be publishing these comments on the council's website by the end of February. The Local Plan is expected to go to a public enquiry in July of this summer although this could still be delayed.

Chalgrove Airfield. You may have seen the recent news that Homes England (formerly Homes & Communities Agency) has confirmed it remains committed to its proposed housing and employment site at Chalgrove Airfield. SODC has welcomed their commitment to the site, which is a strategic housing site in the forthcoming Local Plan. However, Martin Baker have made it plain that they will not relinquish their lease and will fight vigorously any attempt to go for a Compulsory Purchase Order. I have complained that as the decision to include the site at the full council meeting on 28th September was made on the basis of incorrect information (Martin Baker still negotiating) the whole plan should go back to full council for further discussion as its delivery is in serious doubt and therefore could affect the housing numbers we are required to include in the plan. It is also possible that the Planning Inspector will not be happy including the site with such doubts about its delivery.

New community lottery launch.

Preparations are under way for our new community lottery called SO Charitable Lottery (SO standing for South Oxfordshire). SODC needs your help to tell good causes in your communities about an event on 28 February, 2-3.30pm, at Cornerstone in Didcot, where they

will be able to get more information on how to register as beneficiaries. The lottery will raise funds for local voluntary, community and charitable organisations while giving residents the chance to win prizes by purchasing £1 tickets. When residents sign up to the lottery tickets they will be able to choose which of the good causes they want to support. Good causes need to meet certain criteria to join the scheme. They can find out more and let us know if they would like to attend the event by emailing the [policy and partnerships team](#) or calling 01235 422168.

David Turner
13th February 2018