

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report March 2019

Elections information for candidates and agents. Information for candidates and election agents for the local elections is now available on the South and Vale websites. This includes key dates and links to guidance from the Electoral Commission. We are holding two briefing sessions to cover the processes and requirements for nominations, revised district ward and parish boundaries, and arrangements for polling day and the count:

Thursday 14 March at 7pm in Meeting Room 1 at Milton Park offices. This session is open to anyone who is considering standing for election and/or their agents. To confirm your attendance at this session, please email our Elections team.

Wednesday 17 April at 7pm in the Diamond Room at Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot. This session is open to candidates and agents.

We will circulate the slides following the briefing for those unable to attend.

Housing Delivery Test passed. Last month, the government published its Housing Delivery Test results and both South and Vale passed comfortably with 179 and 334 per cent respectively. The annual test was introduced with the amended National Planning Policy Framework last year - it measures how many houses are actually being built. If any planning authority fails to meet 95 per cent of their housing requirement for up to three years, different levels of sanctions can be applied depending on how badly the authority is performing.

Not so n-ice! Just 29 per cent of pubs and restaurants we tested, last summer, met the satisfactory levels of hygiene for ice. Our Food and Safety team took more than 80 samples from a number of venues across both our districts following media reports of faecal matter found in ice. The team were shocked at the results and worked with all the businesses involved to improve standards. They gave advice and guidance on the storage and serving of ice and more recent tests showed that all the venues had improved and had met satisfactory standards. Every year the team tests around 150 samples from venues across the districts as part of their food hygiene inspections. For more information take a look at our inspections pages on our South and Vale websites.

Recycling wheel giveaway. You may have seen on our social media posts the waste team has produced handy recycling wheels for residents. The wheels are free and spin to provide a colourful display to show what can be recycled. The spinning wheels are already available for residents to pick up from a number of local libraries, Parish Councils, etc and are being delivered to Cornerstone and The Beacon. Attention is also drawn to the SODC "Binzone" app. The app is easy to use and provides all recycling details and tells residents when and what waste collections are due. It can be downloaded onto a mobile phone or tablet by searching on your app store or google play.

Pop-Up business school success. Earlier this month, 55 people attended a Pop-Up Business School that we sponsored for residents in Faringdon. The free five-day workshop taught residents how to get a business started and build up their online and social media profiles. Entrepreneurs attending set up a wide range of companies during the week, including a food experience consultancy and a handmade sofa business. We're also sponsoring the school to come to Berinsfield from 29 April-3 May. If you know of anyone who would be interested in attending the Berinsfield week, they can register and find out more details at www.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/berinsfield.

Local Plan update. The six-week consultation for the Local Plan 2011-2034 has now closed. More than 660 people attended 11 drop-in sessions which were held. Officers are now collating and reviewing all comments and estimate we have received over 2,000 representations. We will keep you updated on the plan as it progresses.

Fly-tipper prosecuted. A man from Didcot has been handed a four-month suspended prison sentence and banned from driving for six months after admitting dumping a large amount of waste on rural land near Berinsfield. John James, who appeared for sentencing at Oxford Magistrates Court earlier this month, was ordered to pay costs totalling £1,351 along with the custodial sentence and a disqualification from driving.

Ten people fined over unpaid council tax information. Ten people in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse have been fined after they failed to return information relating to demands for unpaid council tax. If someone fails to pay their council tax, in order to retrieve the money owed, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils obtain liability orders and send out requests for personal information, such as details about their employment, income and savings. This also means the councils are more informed when they determine what enforcement action they should take. It is a criminal offence for someone to not return this information. On Monday 11 February at Oxford Magistrates' Court, ten people were found guilty for not returning the information as requested. All the individuals were fined £110 and ordered to pay £100 costs and a £30 victim surcharge. This is in addition to any debt recovery costs previously incurred.

David Turner
4th March 2019