

## SODC Councillor's Monthly Report January 2020

### **Oxfordshire Councils awarded cold weather funding to help people experiencing**

**homelessness.** Five Oxfordshire councils have been awarded more than £92,000 in government funding to support homeless people this winter. The £92,708 award from the Cold Weather Fund will help the county's city and district councils provide services for people experiencing homelessness. These include up to 24 beds across Oxfordshire. The Cold Weather Fund award will support a number of projects:

Cherwell District Council is commissioning five winter beds in Banbury for people with complex needs and £25,000 will help meet running costs and to provide individual tenancy support to residents. This will help them to engage with health and support services and maintain their accommodation through budgeting and claiming all necessary benefits.

A further £25,000 goes towards personal accommodation plans for people in Oxford who are rough sleeping or at risk of doing so and whose needs are harder to meet in a hostel or winter shelter – an example would be using council temporary accommodation for someone leaving prison who wants to avoid contact with alcohol or drugs.

£18,750 will fund the employment of a hospital-based embedded housing worker with a countywide remit. The embedded housing worker will advise NHS staff on housing and homelessness prevention options, helping them provide better support to their own patients. An example of this would be preventing delayed transfer of care (“bed blocking”) by helping someone find or return to accommodation.

Embedded housing workers in hospitals helped end or prevent homelessness for half (49 percent) of completed cases during the pilot Oxfordshire Trailblazer project that ended earlier this year.

£15,000 will help provide accommodation and extra staffing at the winterlong shelter that opened in Oxford at the beginning of November. The winter shelter provides up to 13 beds that are open to anyone experiencing homelessness – whether or not they have a local connection or recourse to public funds.

The winter shelter is currently operating on an interim basis at Simon House and will transfer to the new assessment centre and shelter in Floyds Row in January. Access to the winter shelter is through the assessment and outreach team, OxSPOT.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils are providing six winter beds for people experiencing rough sleeping in their areas. £8,958 will allow the councils to employ

two night time workers and safely increase capacity for these extra beds in an existing supported accommodation project.

**Letter from Council Leader to Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.** The Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, Cllr Sue Cooper, sent the following letter to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State Housing, Communities and Local Government:

Dear Mr. Jenrick,

On Thursday 19 December, South Oxfordshire District Council passed the following motion:

“Recognising the financial position of the Council, and the need to ensure that residents are represented by a robust and sustainable council, officers are asked to bring forward proposals for South Oxfordshire District Council to consider whether or not a formal merger with the Vale of White Horse District Council, with the same total number of District Councillors, creating a single district council based on their combined geography with increased financial resilience would be beneficial. This work should also consider the options for the development of Area Committees within this model, to ensure that decision making is devolved to the lowest appropriate level. Should any formal merger proposal be developed in future, the Constitution Review Group will be asked to recommend appropriate constitutional models for consideration by Council.”

**The South and Vale Business Support team at South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils is celebrating after winning an important national award.** The team was presented with the Institute of Economic Development 2019 Greatest Economic Impact Award a national conference in recognition of the councils’ successful ‘Stronger Economy – Start-Up’ initiative, which stimulated the local economy by supporting 87 new businesses to start up in just 18 months. This was achieved by holding practical workshops in Didcot, Faringdon, Berinsfield and Shrivenham. The team was praised by Sir Howard Bernstein, IED Patron, and Bev Hurley, Chair of the Institute, for attending each business workshop to raise awareness of the councils’ support and to provide general reassurance to people thinking of starting their own enterprise. Residents attending said they felt encouraged knowing the councils’ team is available to support their business growth and help signpost them to new opportunities.

**SODC Local Plan.** We are still awaiting information from the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State Housing, Communities and Local Government what he is proposing to do about the Local Plan. You will recall that on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 he prevented SODC having

any discussions about a way forward. We hope that with the General Election over he will be soon making the position clear.

David Turner  
SODC Councillor (Chalgrove Ward)  
1<sup>st</sup> January 2020