

## **SODC Councillor's Monthly Report Mid-January 2022**

**Number of rough sleepers recorded as zero on 31 December 2021.** The number of rough sleepers recorded in both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts on 31 December 2021 was zero. This is the first time since 2013 that no rough sleepers were recorded in both councils' areas. The councils are committed to ending rough sleeping in the districts. Their housing needs team work to this premise through targeted prevention and early intervention measures to help people at risk avoid homelessness. The team has an impressive 85 per cent success rate. Each year this translates into preventing hundreds of households from becoming homeless or rough sleeping. They are working closely with partners, health and care agencies, housing and support providers and voluntary agencies to develop a new housing-led approach in Oxfordshire. This approach offers rapid access to long term accommodation and intensive support for vulnerable homeless households.

**Smaller communities could have a greater say on housing developments in South and Vale.** Small communities in the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire will now have an opportunity for greater influence on how and where houses and other developments should be built in their area. After the two district councils put together a successful joint bid for government grant funding of up to £45,000, the government has announced the districts will be part of a national pilot of a new, simpler approach to Neighbourhood Planning. Neighbourhood Planning is a process where a community – usually led by the town or parish council – can develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and influence development in their local area. **My Comment.** Whilst I welcome an attempt to simplify the system it does not stop our central Government running roughshod over local views as happened in the current South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

**Major toilet revamp to include a new Space to Change for Henley.** Work has started this week on a major upgrade of the public toilets in Grey's Road car park, Henley, making it accessible for the whole community. The toilets will feature a Space to Change – a specially designed area featuring a wheelchair accessible toilet and a height adjustable adult-sized changing bench and hoist. The refurbishment will also include three new separate toilets and there will also be a new welfare room for car park inspectors and a storage area. The £145,000 work is being paid for and carried out by South Oxfordshire District Council. £45,000 of this figure will come from Community Infrastructure Levy contributions the council secured from housing developers to help fund community facilities in the area.

**SO Charitable Lottery raises an additional £15,000 for good causes.** The SO Charitable Lottery will be giving an additional £15,000 to good causes in South Oxfordshire this year through money raised in its community fund. There are currently 75 organisations and charities across the district that have joined the lottery, which provides them with vital income to support our communities, this has proved especially important for them during the pandemic. Since its launch in 2018 over £63,000 has been distributed to good causes in the district that have signed up to the South Oxfordshire District Council scheme.

**Government's cut in council funding could put public services at risk.** Councillors in South Oxfordshire have expressed their disappointment in government proposals that would mean a cut in funding for the district council and a lack of any certainty over its future finances. The government is consulting on proposals for a one-year financial settlement for local authorities, which amounts to a cut in funding for South Oxfordshire District Council at

a time of high inflation and at a time when council finances across the country are already under significant strain. That financial strain has been made worse in the past two years as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cllr David Rouane, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “Despite the government’s claims of an overall increase in spending, this amounts to a real terms cut in our finances. Councils like ours around the country are working hard to balance their books – a job that is made significantly more difficult by government cuts, and by the lack of any long- term clarity

**South Oxfordshire promises to become a local leader in tackling the climate emergency.**

District councillors have agreed a series of steps to help ensure that South Oxfordshire becomes a real local leader when it comes to tackling the climate emergency. At their meeting on 9 December councillors voted in favour of taking actions which are in line with the Glasgow Climate Pact and its associated declarations agreed by nations attending COP26 in November. The Chair of the council’s Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee said that the council is now committed to providing leadership in the form of clear and regular guidance and information which is open and honest about the changes required of us all if we are to reach net zero carbon emissions. The council also agreed to publish a Climate Action Plan to help speed up work locally.

David Turner, SODC Councillor (Chalgrove Ward)  
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