

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report May 2022

COVID SODC Councillor's Budget. Each South Oxfordshire District Councillor was provided with a £2000 budget to assist volunteers helping people in COVID19 related problems. I have kept informed all Parish Councils and Parish meetings and other appropriate organisations of the grants available. From my budget I have provided the following:

- **Chalgrove Parish Council.** £500 towards food parcels etc for disadvantaged people.
- **CHATS (Chalgrove Transport Scheme).** Two grants one of £400 and another later one of £300 towards all the hygiene equipment required during Covid19 restrictions when transporting people to hospitals, doctor's surgeries and dentists, etc.
- **Chalgrove Brass Band COVID Protective instrument equipment** a grant of £90.

The scheme is now closed.

My annual Councillors budget of £5000 towards community projects have been distributed as follows:

1. **Chalgrove/Watlington First Steps Children's Centres.** £2910 towards various projects.
2. **Berrick Salome Parish Council.** £800 towards a laptop computer to allow planning applications to be visible on a screen at their Parish Council meetings.
3. **Chalgrove Parish Council.** £1281 for a tennis practice wall on the recreation field.

A new scheme will commence late summer 2022. I will keep you informed when it opens for requests.

Joint SODC & VoWH Local Plan. Work is continuing on the next Local Plan which is an ongoing process which starts soon after the adoption of a Local Plan which you will recall SODC was forced into adopting by the then Secretary of State Robert Jenrick

New planning application for 160 homes. This is on the Watlington side of the 120 homes being still constructed by Miller Homes. You may recall that SODC turned down the Miller Homes application, but on appeal the Secretary of State gave it planning permission.

Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy. SODC has now provided charging points in car parks in Wallingford in line with the Countywide strategy with more to come in SODC owned car parks in the future.

Cornerstone's summer of fun. Visit Cornerstones website for details of theatre and music productions, art weeks, etc. <https://www.cornerstone-arts.org/>

Experience the buzz when elite cycling returns to South Oxfordshire. People across South Oxfordshire will be able to experience the buzz of one of Britain's biggest cycling events when The Women's Tour returns to South Oxfordshire on Saturday 11 June. Thousands of people are expected to line the route as about 100 professional riders race through the streets of Didcot, Wallingford and Crowmarsh. Details on the SODC website

Leisure facilities. All the SODC Leisure centres are now open and flourishing again following the closures instigated under previous COVID rules, but with precautions still operating.

Update Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Accommodation. The majority of the accommodation visits across the county have now either been carried out or booked in – the availability of hosts over Easter has played a part here. The number of properties being rejected for overcrowding or poor housing conditions remains very low in every district. There are a small number of partially approved properties that are waiting for improvements. The number of properties where guests have arrived before the accommodation visit takes place is also very low. We will continue to book in visits for new host properties that enter the system over the next few weeks.

Community support. As a partnership, we have been working with Asylum Welcome to ensure that both hosts and Ukrainians have access to a network of support – and that it is as safe and effective as possible. Asylum Welcome is keeping a track of all offers of community support across the county. To make best use of this significant response, together, we are proposing to expand the community liaison officer resource available in each district and the city to coordinate, advise and refer guests to the support that is available to them, including across housing, education and health.

Schools. School places are being found for Ukrainian children. Applications for school places from guests are being considered alongside all other applications but the county council is working hard to ensure that places are offered as close as possible to where guests are living. We recognise that schools provide significant wrap around support to all children and are often the first port of call for identifying welfare concerns, so we are encouraging hosts and guests to register the Ukrainian children in their care for school places as soon as possible once they have arrived in Oxfordshire. The County Council is also writing to all headteachers when schools return for the summer term, reminding them of their responsibility to provide free school meals for any Ukrainian children that are placed with them. Officers will contact any individual schools where issues are identified to resolve these quickly.

Health. The government has recently published some guidance to help primary health care professionals assess and address the health needs of Ukrainian guests. Councillors may find some of the insight shared within this guidance helpful in understanding more about our guests.

Signposting. A reminder, councillors can direct general Ukraine queries to:

- Website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ukraine

- Oxfordshire Ukraine helpline: +44 1865 966444 / 01865 966 444 (opening hours: 8.45am - 5pm, Monday to Friday. Closed weekends and bank holidays).

Email: ukraineresponse@oxfordshire.gov.uk

David Turner

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3rd May 2022