

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report July 2022 Updated

Have your say on our Joint Local Plan. We've already received hundreds of individual comments on our Joint Local Plan consultation, but don't forget – we need yours too! You should use our full survey to take part, so we can identify that your responses come from a Town or Parish Council.

To help us get more responses from a wider range of residents, we've also launched an easy-to-use interactive website that allows residents to view the different issues facing both districts (South & Vale) and how we might tackle them. Please help spread the word and encourage your communities to visit the site and answer the questions. There's more on our South Oxfordshire Joint Local Plan pages

Getting families active. We've just launched You Move – a new initiative providing low-cost or free activities for children and families who receive benefits-related free school meals in Oxfordshire. Activities available so far include cricket, swimming and badminton. More on our website at www.southoxon.gov.uk/youmove

Better Leisure support for refugees. On the subject of activities – our leisure provider, GLL, is offering refugees a free three-month Better Health Centre membership, or a subscription to a course or lesson. More on their website.

Didcot Broadway update. A fantastic new photography art project for local youngsters aged between 11 and 16 will be the centrepiece of some new hoardings on the Broadway in Didcot. We're putting the hoarding up to secure the properties we own there while we're formulating plans for the future of the site. Some of the run-down buildings could be demolished to make way for new high-quality affordable and sustainable and energy efficient homes on brownfield land in the town, but in the meantime its important the buildings are secure, while the photography project helps make the site more visually appealing, while also encouraging young local talent. The images were taken by young people involved with Didcot TRAIN and Damascus Youth Project after they worked with Etain O'Carroll, a photographer from Oxford. We'll share the pictures as soon as they're available.

Household Support Fund extension opens soon. More help is on the way for households who are struggling to afford energy, food and other related expenses. We're opening the extended Household Support Fund next week in South Oxfordshire. Please signpost people who may need this support to our website next week and if possible, share our social media messages. Initially the fund will only be open to applications from residents who haven't received support in earlier rounds. To help speed up the application process, residents will be able to complete a form on the website and email it to Citizens Advice. Our Community Hub team can help people complete the forms if needed. Details on the voucher scheme will be on our website next week.

New cleaning project for South Oxfordshire. South Oxfordshire District Council is putting money into an extra deep cleaning project, which is set to tackle areas in the district which need a spruce up. The council has set aside £88,000 of its Climate Action Fund to pay for extra work at nominated sites over the next nine months. The waste team is consulting town and parish councils to select the areas needing extra cleaning.



New Chair appointed, as motions to help reduce energy bills and a review of the process to consider planning applications also agreed at busy Council meeting

A new Chair, helping residents reduce their energy bills and planning were all on the agenda at a jam-packed South Oxfordshire District Council meeting.

At the top of the meeting, Cllr David Turner, who has been a district councillor for Chalgrove Ward since 1995, took on the role of Chair of the Council for the second time having previously been Chair in 1999-2000. He takes over from Cllr Jo Robb, who will continue her role of River Thames Champion.

Cllr Turner said, “I feel very honoured and excited to be Chair and am very much looking forward to getting out and about to meet residents and community groups, especially those that have helped support those in need during the pandemic. “I’m excited to raise funds for my two chosen charities too. The Chalgrove & Watlington Children’s Centre family hubs are vital for families living in a rural setting – particularly over the past two years people have felt somewhat cut off from others, so this service can be a lifeline for local young families. I also plan to raise funds for the River Thame Conservation Trust to help them to continue with building more natural habitats for wildlife and improving the quality of the water throughout the length of the watercourses including Chalgrove Brook, The River Thame & subsequently the River Thames.”

Requests for new litter or dog bins. Requests for new litter and dog waste bins have been a hot topic recently, so here’s a quick update on how it works. Dog waste can now be mixed with general litter and so it makes sense to install litter bins rather than ones for dog waste

only. When parishes ask us to install new bins, we must consider what need there is for a new bin alongside the ongoing costs of emptying it as well as the initial installation costs. We will assess the site for evidence of a litter or dog fouling problem and consider if:

- there are existing bins nearby
- there's a high footfall
- it's on an adopted highway or council owned land, or a risk to users or residents living nearby
- it's close to the public highway to allow crews to empty it safely

If you'd like more information on new litter bins, please contact the Waste team via waste.team@southoxon.gov.uk

Litter mapping. While we're on the subject, the Waste team is carrying out an ongoing review of litter bins in our District. We have also launched a litter mapping project where litter pickers record where and what type of rubbish is picked up so we can target resources accordingly. You can find out more information on our litter mapping project on our websites: southoxon.gov.uk/littermapping

Zero tolerance to knife crime. Thames Valley Police has launched a new campaign against knife crime called Operation Deter. The aim is to make better use of charging and remanding offenders to court to ensure that the right message is sent to those found in possession of a knife. Initially the early focus will be around Milton Keynes, but it is intended that the approach will be spread across the Thames Valley region

Unauthorised encampments - changes to the law. On Tuesday 28 June the law around, unauthorised encampments changed. It's now a criminal offence to reside with a vehicle on land without permission. The new offence will be committed when someone aged 18 or over causes significant damage, disruption or distress and are requested to leave or remove their property by the landowner or police.

New partnership targets improved water quality for the River Thames at Wallingford. South Oxfordshire District Council has launched a new partnership aimed at improving the health and quality of the River Thames at Wallingford. The council is working with environmental charity Thames21 and volunteers from the local community to collect water samples and complete user surveys, to provide much-needed information on the overall health of the river. The project aims to improve everybody's understanding of the causes of river pollution locally and ensure that all users of this stretch of the river – including swimmers, rowers and anglers – can make informed decisions about how they use the Thames. The water samples taken at Wallingford, as well as from several points along the river in South Oxfordshire, will be analysed by Thames Water who are supporting the project. The laboratory analysis will show levels of bacteria, including E.coli and Intestinal Enterococci, that are found in sewage and can make river users very ill. This data, together with surveys of river users over the summer, will be used to get a better understanding of how popular the site is and the extent of any issues with the water quality that poses a risk to humans and the overall health of the river.

Later this year, South Oxfordshire District Council will use the information collected during the project to inform an application to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for bathing water status for a mile stretch of the Thames with Wallingford at the centre. If bathing water status is awarded, the Environment Agency would develop a bathing water profile for the site and put plans in place to monitor and protect the water during the bathing season in subsequent years. Achieving this award would not solve all pollution problems, but it would help to drive investment needed to ensure the river is suitable for people and wildlife. So far, 20 local volunteers have signed up to take part in the project and received training from Thames21 in how to take accurate samples from the river.

More help for people to pay food and energy bills. More help is on the way for people who are struggling to pay their food, energy and other related bills. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have opened a voucher scheme to support households who can't afford to pay for life's essentials. The scheme is part of the Government's Household Support Fund (HSF) which was extended by the chancellor in the recent budget. A portion of funds allocated to Oxfordshire County Council have been allocated to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils as part of a wider support package across the county, which includes help for children eligible for free school meals through the holidays. Funding is limited and the scheme is open initially to people who have not had support from it before. However, the councils will open it to second applications if funds remain.

David Turner SODC Councillor (Chalgrove Ward)

28th June 2022

Updated 13th July 2022