

District Councillor Report

Cllr Jo Robb, South Oxfordshire District Council

April 2023

Thank you!

To everyone who participated in the Great British Spring Clean from 17 March to 1 April. More than 1000 residents participated and together we collected 560 sacks of rubbish from public areas across the two districts. Not only does litter picking make our local area beautiful, there is now growing evidence of the mental and physical health benefits - well done to all who got involved.

Litter

The volume of litter on roadside verges has been, quite understandably, a source of great concern for residents and parish councils alike. South Oxfordshire's waste services, including roadside litter picking, are agreed under a contract with Biffa. The contract, which was signed more than five years ago, commits Biffa to strict targets on bin collections and to keeping our verges tidy with regular litter picks. I have reached out to the leader of the council, the cabinet member responsible and the chief executive, raising the issue of roadside litter and asking for more regular cleans.

The waste team have been working closely with Biffa to make sure they are providing the service our residents pay for and expect.

Please do report roadside litter to: admin.southoxford@biffa.co.uk and also be sure to report any missed bin collections to the same email address or by calling 03000 610 610.

For the second year in a row, SODC is offering parish "deep cleans". We are also supporting local communities with local litter picks. If your community group would like to borrow equipment for litter picking or request a deep cleanse, please contact waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk to arrange.

Recycling

The government has put on hold plans to overhaul recycling in England and Wales. Under the proposals, aimed at bringing recycling rates up to 65% nationally by 2035, residents across the country would be required to sort their waste into seven (!) separate bins. Nationally, recycling rates have been stagnant at 45% for the past several years. However, South Oxfordshire has the second highest recycling rate nationally – 67%, so we are already exceeding the government's target, some 12 years ahead of schedule.

Contamination is an issue, however. A reminder to residents to please ensure bottles and containers are free of food residue – be sure to wash the Nutella out of the jar before you put it into the recycling. And of course, no plastic film.

We have excellent information on the website about what is recyclable:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/what-goes-in-what-bin/the-green-recycling-wheelie-bin/>

Some plastics, including black plastic pots from the garden centre, are not recyclable as they already at the end of their life.

Rigid plastics such as toys, flowerpots (such as the taupe ones that come with gift plants in them) and DVD cases also cannot be recycled. Take the Recycling Quiz to learn more:

<https://survey.southandvale.gov.uk/s/TheGreenRecyclingBinQuiz/>

Please could you use your parish communication channels to pass on information about recycling to residents and encourage them to use the website to learn more about recycling in our district. We want to maintain our position and even take the top spot nationally!

Household Waste Recycling Centre Strategy 2023-2043

While we're on the subject of waste, OCC is consulting on its new Household Waste Recycling Strategy. Please do give your views. There are some great ideas in there including providing ways for residents to repair and reuse old items: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/household-waste-recycling-centre-strategy-2023-2043>

Garden Waste

Garden waste customers can put extra green waste out on their normal garden waste collection day from 17-28 April. This should be a maximum of three black sacks worth – no builder's waste or rubble please. More information available here: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/garden-waste/>

Retrofitting Public Buildings

Do you know of a community building that is in need of retrofitting? Many of our parish halls, community centres and scout halls are cold, draughty and expensive to heat. The council is providing information and guidance on how to retrofit these buildings and has suggestions on where to find funding to insulate them and install renewable energy. Community groups can save money in the long run and reduce their carbon emissions by retrofitting so please do see the council's website for more information and pass it on to groups who might benefit:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/what-you-can-do-as-a-community/improving-the-energy-efficiency-of-community-buildings/>

Potholes

I have received a large number of emails about potholes on our rural roads. While Highways maintenance is a county and not a district matter, I nonetheless wrote to the cabinet member at OCC to convey the extreme urgency of the situation. Our roads are dangerous.

Residents might be interested to read the following from the county council:

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/highways-teams-working-hard-to-repair-roads--but-more-help-needed-from-government/>

And from the Local Government Association: <https://www.lgafirst.co.uk/news/rough-road-ahead/>