

SODC Report: 10 May 2021

Cllrs Jo Robb and Lorraine Hillier

Elections – 6 May

The count for the local elections were completed yesterday (Sunday, 9 May) but the count for the Police and Crime Commissioner is taking place today (Monday, 10 May). Verification took place on Friday, with counting on Sunday. The process was slower than usual because of the need to maintain social distancing at the counting centre – the number of counters was severely reduced. There were also a number of close contests (in Goring and Benson and Cholsey most notably), requiring recounts.

In addition to the County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner elections (Update to be provided by Cllr David Bartholomew), there were two District Council by-elections for South Oxfordshire. Wheatley was won by Tim Bearder of the Liberal Democrats (Lib Dem hold) and Didcot North East by Andrea Warren (Conservative gain). This takes the numbers on SODC to: Liberal Democrat: 13; Conservative: 10; Green: 5; Labour: 3; HRG: 3; Independent: 2.

Assets of Community Value

Registration is now open for the Assets of Community Value (ACV) online event taking place on Wednesday 12 May from 12 noon to 1pm.

This will be the first online event of the year in our programme of engagement activities with town and parish councils and is open to all Town and Parish councillors in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

The event is aimed at those who are interested in learning more about the statutory ACV process, which forms part of the Localism Act and gives local groups a right to nominate a building or land for listing by the local authority as an asset of community value.

Led by James Carpenter, Head of Corporate Services, the session will explain both the legislation and the tests an ACV nomination needs to satisfy to achieve a successful listing and will highlight the resources available to guide nominating groups through the process.

Participants can also submit questions to James, although we ask that questions are emailed in advance of the event and by 5pm on Friday 7 May please to communityenablement@southandvale.gov.uk

Please register for your place via Eventbrite. The deadline for registration is Tuesday 11 May at 5pm.

If you have any event queries, please email communityenablement@southandvale.gov.uk

Collaborative Housing

Collaborative Housing is hosting a four-day event on community-led housing in the Thames Valley THIS WEEK. This may be of particular interest to larger villages or those who are looking to start Neighbourhood Plans and who are seeking to address the problems of housing affordability in their villages.

You can sign up to the event here: <http://thamesvalleyclh-festival.eventbrite.com/>

And see an overview of the events here: <https://mailchi.mp/dacde370ae4d/festival-events>

Local Plan 2035 and Bioabundance

The Honourable Mrs Justice Lang has refused the oral plea from Bioabundance CIC for permission to proceed with an application for judicial review against the Council's decision to adopt the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. Mrs Justice Lang also agreed a costs award up to the maximum capped limit of £10,000, which covers the Council's full costs of £8,266. The remainder was awarded to other interested parties.

Today's judgment supports the previous decision on the papers by The Honourable Mr Justice Dove on 30 March that also found that the initial application by Bioabundance CIC for judicial review should not progress.

Bioabundance has now sought to take the decision to the Court of Appeal. The Local Plan 2035 remains the plan for South Oxfordshire, carrying full weight. It remains a material consideration in all planning decisions in the District.

Grant Funding for New Affordable Homes

SODC has launched a new grant fund for Registered Providers and others to help deliver new affordable homes across our district – one of our main corporate priorities.

Affordability, the environment and value for money will be key considerations when the Council assesses the applications. The funding will be allocated in two rounds, with the first open now until 30 June. Round two is planned for the autumn.

We've already contacted some Registered Providers directly to let them know about the scheme. All the information can be found on our South and Vale affordable housing pages. Do let us know if we can put you in touch with the relevant officers for advice.

Town and Parish Council Forums

A date for your diary: on 27th May, SODC will host the first of a series of Town and Parish Council Forums. This forum will focus on response to the climate emergency at Town and Parish Council level. Keep an eye out for your invitation and more detail this week.