

## **SODC District Councillor's Report**

**July 2017**

### **Single Council for Oxfordshire - update**

Oxford City Council and Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District Councils have submitted a plan for the future governance of Oxfordshire to the Government. You can view their thoughts here:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=bcc0b9d102&e=eda6ce4f57>

As a holding response, our Leader and Oxfordshire County Council issued the following statement: “We welcome the contributions of Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils to the debate about the future of council services and investment in Oxfordshire. We are reviewing their report for the very first time and will discuss our response with the other councils. In the meantime, our three councils remain willing to discuss our Better Oxfordshire proposal, which is currently with the Secretary of State for consideration.”

You can view the Better Oxfordshire proposal, submitted to the government by our councils and the county council in March, here:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=d2b9f02c7d&e=eda6ce4f57>

We are not expecting an early government decision on our bid, or the counter proposal, but we will update you as soon as we have any news.

### **Planning Matters**

#### **Upcoming public appeals**

Tetsworth - Inquiry for a traveller site of 12 pitches outside the Green Belt scheduled for 6 and 7 June has been postponed by the Planning Inspectorate until Autumn. New dates: 21-24 November.

Venue - Tetsworth Memorial Hall

CABI, Crowmarsh - we recently refused an application for new offices and residential development at this site - there will be an appeal into this decision from 4 to 6 July.

Venue - Howbery Park

Benson - appeal against refusal of outline application for 130 houses off St Helens Avenue, inquiry runs 1 and 2 August.

Venue - Howbery Park

Long Wittenham - an appeal is taking place against our non-determination of application for 35 homes. There is likely to be an inquiry but the date hasn't yet been confirmed.

## **5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) update**

We have updated our Five Year Housing Land Supply position.

The district has a supply of 4.1 years, therefore, we will continue to make planning decisions using paragraphs 14 and 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework and focuses on sustainable development and the need to boost the supply of housing.

We are able to demonstrate more than three years supply, which means we can use the ministerial statement made last year and provide some protection for those areas with neighbourhood development plans.

A copy of the statement is available on our website:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=51848ebadc&e=eda6ce4f57>

## **Neighbourhood Plans**

If you are involved with producing a neighbourhood plan, have a look at the Good Councillor's Guide to Neighbourhood Planning, which was produced by the National Association of Local Councils.

The document contains a helpful section on the role of parish and town councillors in neighbourhood planning.

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=e5e008f1fc&e=eda6ce4f57>

## **And finally.... two award winning designs**

We don't just approve applications for extensions and large housing developments, we're also encouraging outstanding design and construction. Two developments in our district have recently won national awards:

**Chilterns Building Design Awards - overall winner: Hundred Hills Winery, Stonor Valley, Henley** Planning application P15/S3398/FUL

Judges noted that the design of this property significantly enhances the site and locality, completely harmonises with its setting, uses high-quality local materials and pays attention to detailing. Above all it takes account of its relationship to the special character of the Chilterns.

**The John Turner Building, Shiplake College** also received a Commended award.

**RIBA South Award 2017 - winner: Handsmooth House, Well Place, Ispden**

Planning application P12/S1822/FUL

Whilst the scheme was described as 'simple, graceful and elegant', the jury said the house was a remarkable, bold and stark addition to the countryside setting.

## **Communications**

### **A reminder; Roadwork alerts straight to your inbox**

You can now access the latest information on roadworks in your area from <https://oxfordshire.roadworks.org/> You can also set up email alerts by clicking on the envelope icon on the top left hand side of the webpage. It will only take a few minutes to complete your contact information and personalise the roads and areas that you'd like to receive alerts from - this will reduce the amount of emails you receive on this subject.

To receive **South News** visit [www.southoxon.gov.uk/southnews](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/southnews)

## **Councils recover Council Tax arrears**

Over £1.6million in council tax arrears was recovered last year thanks to enforcement action taken by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils.

In 2016/17 the councils issued over 5,300 court summonses to people who had failed to pay their council tax. Magistrates then granted liability orders against 3,600 of those individuals - this meant enforcement action, including the use of bailiffs, could be taken to retrieve the money.

Almost all of those in arrears then paid the money they owed, however the councils were forced to take further action against 96 people to ensure they paid their fair share towards the cost of providing public services.

This resulted in 53 people receiving charging orders - which allows the councils to enforce the sale of a persons' property to retrieve the money. One person who deliberately failed to pay was sent to prison, while seven were given suspended sentences.

The councils also recovered and saved a further £167,000 after 62 people were caught claiming discounts on their council tax they weren't entitled to. This resulted in nine being prosecuted in court and 47 fined.

Cllr Jane Murphy, Deputy Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council said: "It's vital that everyone pays their fair share for the services we provide, such as waste and recycling collections. Anyone who doesn't do so puts added pressure on the public purse and effectively cheats all those who do contribute."

### **Council tax court proceedings 2016/17**

South Oxfordshire issued 2,823 court summonses to people that had failed to pay their council tax

Magistrates then granted us liability orders for 1,722 of those individuals - this meant we could actively pursue them to retrieve the money by using bailiffs and other appropriate methods. This resulted in £507,327 council tax arrears being collected. However, we still had to take committal action against 65 people who, despite repeated requests and appropriate action, refused to pay their council tax. As a result, we recovered a another £325,000 and four people received suspended prison sentences. We were also given permission by the courts to impose charging

orders on properties owned by 34 individuals - recovering a further £190,000 in the process

#### **Council tax fraud 2016/17:**

22 people were also caught fraudulently claiming discount on their council tax. This ensured we recovered and saved £52,000. Three people were prosecuted in court and 16 were fined

#### **Free workshops for businesses**

As part of the economic development team's support for local businesses, two free workshops will take place next month. Please help spread the word among your local business communities about the events:

##### *Placing a Value on Intangible Assets - Secure and Protect Your Business IP*

11 July, Wallingford Town Hall, 8-10.30am. Hosted by SO Business with Firm Advantage and Knights 1759. Please book here:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=de408fff76&e=eda6ce4f57>

##### *GDPR - Should you be concerned?*

26 July, Milton Park Innovation Centre, 5.30-7.30pm. Hosted by Vale4Business with Faringdon-based CIS. Please book here:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=32737f0c16&e=eda6ce4f57>

#### **Council Grant Scheme**

The Councils' Grants scheme for 2017/18 will open for the next round of applications over the summer: 15 July-6 September

These grants are available to support town/parish councils and not-for-profit organisations across the districts with projects that will improve, replace or create new community facilities.

Please help by spreading the word in your communities. You can find out more and direct people to Capital Grants for further information:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=45c7a54894&e=eda6ce4f57>

#### **Grants for rural community projects**

Grant funding up to £75,000 is available from the LEADER Programme for farmers, foresters, rural businesses and communities involved with projects that create jobs, bring visitors to the area or provide essential community services across South and Vale.

SODC is administering applications. These will be assessed by a Local Area Group (LAG), a non-political group that brings together public, private and community representatives.

Oxfordshire LAG is keen to see applications that will revive local waterways, support local food markets, create vibrant villages, or unlock the potential of woodlands.

To find out more, email [oxfordshire.leader@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:oxfordshire.leader@southandvale.gov.uk) or call 01235 422245.

## **Leisure**

### **Reminder: Wallingford Riverside outdoor pool now open**

The heated outdoor swimming pool by Wallingford Bridge has opened its doors. The site features a 23 metre pool, changing rooms, refreshments and a campsite. Jubilee Splash Park has been open for a while for younger children to enjoy.

A swim costs just £4.45 for adults, £2.85 for junior/seniors or £13.40 for a family swim (two adults and two children). Regular swimmers are also able to take advantage of a season pass for £69 for adults and just £34 for juniors and seniors.

Riverside Outdoor Pool is now open until 3 September\* at the following times:

Monday - Friday 7am-6pm

Saturday-Sunday 9am-6pm

\*subject to adverse weather conditions

For more information about Riverside Park and Pools please visit <http://www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/south-oxfordshire/riverside-park-and-pools> or call 01491 835232.

## **Didcot Garden Town**

We launched the Didcot Garden Town proposed delivery plan and consultation last week (19 June). The six-week consultation runs until 31 July 2017.

The plan proposes significant new public open spaces, leisure facilities, schools, health centres and an upgrade to the station with improved access to the railway museum. Infrastructure, such as roads, cycle paths and utilities are planned alongside a mix of affordable and private rented homes.

As you'll be aware, some expansions to the town have been approved and are already underway, such as phase two of the Orchard Centre. This expansion forms part of wider plans to transform Didcot into a garden town to accommodate 16,000 new homes and supporting 20,000 new jobs in the Science Vale over the next two decades.

View the proposed delivery plan and take part in the consultation at:

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=3f2cb977a9&e=eda6ce4f57>

Following consultation, we will finalise the plan and publish it in the autumn.