

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report November 2020

Coronavirus community support. We have a specially dedicated section of our website (www.southoxon.gov.uk) full of useful information if you have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and need any help. Here are some of the main pages of information.

- Help for individuals and families
- Information if you want to help others or are already doing so
- Support for businesses
- How our services are affected
- Information and advice for landlords and tenants

Have your say on proposed changes to off-street parking in South Oxfordshire. People in South Oxfordshire are encouraged to give their views on some proposed changes to parking arrangements in the District Council's off street car parks. Over the summer the Council's Cabinet agreed to amend the district's parking policy, including changes to charging periods to ensure all towns are treated equally, and measures designed to encourage the use of electric vehicles in order help tackle the climate emergency by reducing emissions. The council is now giving people the chance to have their say before the new parking policy is finalised in early 2021. The council will also seek comments from statutory consultees such as the Police, the highways authority and town and parish councils.

The following changes are being proposed:

- Standard charging periods and times (9am-5pm) to be adopted in all town centre car parks across the districts, including an hour's free parking available at any time during that period, this ensures that those in Henley receive the same benefit as the other towns
- Charges for Sunday parking to apply for all car parks, not just in some locations.
- A maximum stay of two hours to be introduced at the High Street car park in Chinnor to help reduce congestion.
- Half price permits for electric vehicles (capable of travelling 20 miles on zero CO2).
- Additional parking for electric vehicles and powers to issue fines for parking non-electric vehicles in electric charging bays, or for leaving an electric vehicle in the bay when it's not charging.

To find about more about the proposals and to take part in the consultation please visit www.southoxon.gov.uk/parking The consultation is open until Thursday 19 November.

Cllr David Rouane, Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "We encourage people have their say on the proposals we are putting forward for how we operate our car parks. These include changes introducing a Sunday parking fee aimed at improving the availability of parking spaces for shoppers, bringing more people to our town centre shops and cafes. Even with these proposals our parking charges remain low compared to many other areas.

“We are also putting forward measures that will help reduce vehicle emission by making electrical charging bays more widely available and ensuring it’s cheaper to park electric vehicles. We hope that by doing this more people will be encouraged to move away from petrol and diesel vehicles.”

8 million of new funding for affordable homes across South and Vale. £8 million could be pumped into providing more affordable homes across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse following Cabinet meetings at the two district councils. Both councils have a strong commitment to delivering genuinely affordable housing, and reports being discussed by the councils’ Cabinets set out the options to how to spend nearly £4 million in each district to provide a huge boost to local families looking for affordable homes in the area. Cabinet members are discussing making a recommendation to spend the money, which has been received from housing developers that are building in the two districts. This would be additional to targets that the developers are already committed to as part of their planning permissions. This council led initiative will deliver much needed affordable housing, community-led projects and environmentally sustainable projects across the two districts. The reports were discussed at the Cabinet meetings at South Oxfordshire District Council earlier in October and at Vale of White Horse District Council. The funding will be secured through a variety of means such as developer contributions and through an affordable housing delivery programme. There will be criteria on how the money may be spent. The housing industry was particularly affected by the Covid19 lockdown when construction sites closed earlier this year. During this time, the housing industry has been delivering homes at a slower rate than before. Additional investment will ensure that momentum is kept in the delivery of much-needed affordable homes for our residents.

Cllr Robin Bennett, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We’ll be working tirelessly to ensure that residents of South Oxfordshire have genuinely affordable homes available. This funding allows us to support social rent housing, which is substantially cheaper than market rents, as well as projects with high environmental standards, and will be one of many steps we’ll be taking in the coming years to make a significant difference to the availability of good quality homes our residents, and their children and families, can afford to live in.”

Cllr Judy Roberts, Cabinet member for Development and Infrastructure at Vale of White Horse District Council, said “It’s no secret that we live in one of the least affordable areas of the country and we’re doing everything within our power to address that challenge. There are long term problems to tackle, but we can also address immediate difficulties, and this money would make a significant difference in the lives of many in our district in the very near future. I have been an active supporter of affordable housing initiatives and I hope that this new investment will help to make these a reality.”

Northamptonshire man prosecuted for fly-tipping Reading office waste in South Oxfordshire. South Oxfordshire District Council has successfully prosecuted a 30-year-old man from Northampton for fly-tipping and not having a waste carrier’s licence, among other offences, after office furniture was found strewn at the side of the A4074 near Wallingford last year. Paul Parker, from Chadwick Gardens, Northampton attended Oxford Magistrates’ Court on 9 October via video link.

Cleaner Thames River. South Oxfordshire District Council is stepping up its campaign to make the River Thames safe for wildlife and river users by calling for an end to sewage overflows, more public information on water quality and more stringent water testing in the river. The Thames and its tributaries in Oxfordshire are a haven for wildlife.

Leader's statement to Full SODC Council on 8th October 2020. Covid19 update. Unfortunately, we are still living in strange times because of the coronavirus outbreak. Infection rates are increasing across the country although our district currently remains at the amber level (Medium risk), but we're preparing for any changes to that, and to any future changes to restrictions whether that's nationally or locally.

Note. We now know that since the Leader's statement on 8th October a lockdown commences on Thursday 5th December (full details available on Government website).

Our continuing campaign for cleaner air. To mark Clean Air Day (Thursday 8 October) South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils launched a new campaign to encourage people to use less-polluting means of transport, such as walking and cycling, for local journeys. Since March many of us have changed where we work and how far we travel.

Didcot Gateway – the home of the new South and Vale district council offices. Released on October 6, 2020 Didcot will be the home of the new offices for South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils in a move that will help to secure a more sustainable future for the councils, both economically and environmentally.

Oxford to Cambridge Arc: a global asset and national investment priority. Bold vision to create a global hub for innovation and green development that inspires communities worldwide. The Oxford to Cambridge Arc, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer described as a "key economic priority" for the country, has unveiled its bold vision in a prospectus that has been submitted to Government. This of course will have many implications including more housing and traffic issues.

South Oxfordshire Councillors use feedback to develop Corporate Plan themes for the future. In July of this year Cabinet members at South Oxfordshire District Council asked residents and those working in the district to have their say on what mattered to them about where they live to help form the themes of the forthcoming Corporate Plan. The survey had a great response with over 930 people giving their views.

Local Plan to 2035. Inputs to the EIP Inspector's preliminary Report closed at midnight on 2nd November. We are expecting the Inspector's final report on November 15th or thereabouts. SODC Councillors then have to consider it and the Local Plan at its full Council meeting on December 10th.

David Turner

SODC Councillor (Chalgrove Ward)

November 2nd 2020