

SODC Councillor's Monthly Report December 2020

Local Plan to 2035. The Inspector of the Examination in Public's final report has now been published. Details are available on the SODC website. The Inspector has found the plan sound with some modifications particularly in the area of climate change. He has made no changes to the proposed Strategic Sites in the plan which includes Chalgrove Airfield and the ones in the Oxford Green Belt. SODC will now discuss the report and make decisions on the following virtual meeting dates:

Scrutiny Committee on December 7th at 6:30 PM

Cabinet on December 8th at 6:00 PM

Full Council on December 10th at 6:00 PM

If anyone wishes to address these meetings, they should register their interest either by email on the website or by telephone.

Council Cabinets to consider Civil Parking Enforcement proposals. Following a public consultation, a major change aimed at helping to prevent illegal parking could move a step closer in the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire this week. At their respective meetings on 3 and 4 December, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' cabinets will consider whether to move forward with proposals for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) which could see responsibility for enforcement transfer from the police to a new team managed by Oxfordshire County Council. Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils enforce parking in their own off-street car parks. However, enforcement for on-street parking in both districts is carried out by the police. This can put unnecessary extra pressure on police resources and leave parking problems unresolved as the police focus on more serious crimes. Local councils can apply to the government to take on powers for Civil Parking Enforcement which allows them to fine motorists who park illegally or drive in bus lanes. The two councils have been working alongside Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council to investigate the feasibility of implementing CPE arrangements within their three districts. This work has included commissioning a specialist parking consultant to investigate the potential benefits, challenges, and financial requirements of the scheme. In order to implement CPE, cabinets at all three districts need to agree to move forward with the proposals. The councils would then collectively ask Oxfordshire County Council to submit a joint CPE application to the government for approval. CPE is already in place in Oxford city centre and in West Oxfordshire. If the application is approved by the government, parking enforcement on-street in South and Vale would then be carried out by a new team managed by Oxfordshire County Council. Cabinet members at Vale and South Oxfordshire will now decide whether to approve the proposals and therefore ask the county council to move forward and submit the application to the government. They will also confirm the financial contribution that the councils will need to make in order to support the formal application to the Department for Transport to implement Civil Parking Enforcement in their respective districts. If all three districts agree then CPE could be implemented by the end of 2021.

People urged to support local traders in the Vale and South Oxfordshire as councils confirm free parking days in the run up to Christmas. People in the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire can park for free on specific days this December and are being urged to use this opportunity to support their local shops and cafes in the run up to Christmas.

Each year Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils provide free parking days during December to help encourage people to shop locally for their Christmas presents.

Motorists can park in District Council car parks without paying for or displaying a ticket on the following days in December:

Abingdon – Saturdays (5, 12, 19 December)
Faringdon – Saturdays (5, 12, 19 December)
Wantage – Saturdays (5, 12, 19 December)
Didcot – Mondays (7, 14, 21 December)
Goring – Saturdays (5, 12, 19 December)
Henley – Tuesdays (8, 15, 22 December)
Thame – Saturdays (5, 12, 19 December)
Wallingford -Thursdays (10, 17, 24 December)

Users will not have to display a ticket on the free days.

Motorists can also continue to park for free each day outside of the charging period and during the standard free periods offered by both councils, but must they display a ticket during this time.

For more information about parking and district council car parks please visit whitehorsedc.gov.uk/parking/southoxon.gov.uk/parking

Note. The above arrangements are subject to any change in National or local Covid-19 restrictions.

Councillor grant scheme now available. Our councillor grant scheme, which you are eligible to apply for as a Town or Parish council (or Parish Meeting), opened last Friday and will close at noon on Friday 5 February 2021. Each councillor has a budget of £5,000 to award to projects or services that will benefit communities in their ward. The scheme is also open to other non-profit community organisations. We're especially keen to fund projects that will contribute to our new corporate plan priorities, in particular to protect and restore our natural world; action on the climate emergency and improved economic and community well-being. The funding is ideal for projects which are relatively low in costs and can complete within a year. To make an application, firstly have a chat with your Ward Councillor, and then submit an application via our website. If you have any further queries, please contact the community enablement team.

Brexit. While Covid and Christmas may be taking centre stage at the moment we also have a keen eye on Brexit and in particular the impact it will have on our local businesses. The South and Vale Business Support website has published information and links to the government website on what businesses need to do to prepare for the transition. One thing we're recommending that all businesses do is to use the government's step-by-step self-help tool, which provides a specific explanation on exactly what the business needs to do.

We are working with the county council, OxLEP and other partners, to help signpost local businesses to the self-help tool and the government's other advice and guidance in readiness for 1 January.

We will also be working with our partners to share messages about encouraging affected residents that haven't already done so to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme

Business Support update. Local Restrictions Support Grant. So far, we've received 361 applications and are already processing payments to 58 businesses to a total value of £97,000.

This grant is for businesses that pay rates and have been forced to close due to the national lockdown – we estimate we have a total of 1,053 eligible businesses. There is no official deadline for this grant funding.

Additional Restrictions Grant. So far, we have received 207 applications, 175 of which were eligible. We're running some standard fraud checks through independent agencies on these and all future eligible applications before issuing our offer letters to the successful businesses. We've closed 20 applications down because they have either applied to the wrong district, or for the wrong grant scheme – either way we've let them know what they need to do. We're awaiting further information

or for eligibility checks on the remaining 12 applications we've had so far. To help raise awareness of this grants scheme, we've been running a radio advert on Heart FM locally since last Friday. Applications for this round close on 4 December, though we will continue to accept applications from businesses who are notified they incorrectly applied for the Local Restriction Support Grant above.

Fly tipped waste costs supermarket more than £7,300. A company director has been ordered to pay more than £7,300 in fines and court costs after waste from her supermarket was found in South Oxfordshire.

New Covid Compliance Marshals in southern Oxfordshire. From 16 November, two new Covid Compliance Marshals have been employed to promote and encourage businesses and residents across southern Oxfordshire to comply with the COVID-19 public health measures to reduce the impact of the pandemic.

David Turner
SODC Councillor (Chalgrove Ward)
December 1st 2020

Updated 17th December 2020:

“Ask for help now if you think you'll need it this Christmas,” say councils. With food banks and other support organisations running reduced or limited services over the Christmas period, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are urging residents to think ahead and get in touch now if they'll need help with food or essential supplies.

The councils' own Community Hub will be running a limited service and wants to make sure families like Andrew's do not suffer this Christmas. Andrew and his family had less than a day's worth of food left in the house when his whole family had to self-isolate.

A Covid-19 breakout at his child's school meant Andrew couldn't go to work, which left him with no money for food or bills. He called our Community Hub for help.

Andrew is not alone in being left with little or no income for essentials as a result of Covid-19. The councils' therefore want to encourage those in similar situations to access the support that's available to make sure its residents aren't left without supplies over the holidays. Andrew's call resulted in an emergency food parcel and much more. He was signposted to Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre who assessed his financial situation and provided debt consolidation advice.

His housing advisor arranged a referral to the Didcot Baptist Church Emergency Foodbank, and the Emergency Help Didcot community group who arranged ongoing deliveries of food parcels. Andrew was also advised to apply for a Track and Trace grant, to relieve the financial pressure of not being able to go to work.

The Community Hub provides support to people who are in crisis as a result of the pandemic. Since April the team have received 1,300 requests for help and sent out 806 food parcels.

Our team of specially trained call-handlers also signpost people to foodbanks, community support groups, NHS services and other agencies who can help.

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, South Oxfordshire District Council's cabinet member for community services, says: “We don't want anyone to go hungry at any time, especially over the Christmas

period. Like most organisations, we'll be operating very limited services between Christmas and New Year to give our officers a well-earned break. Please do get in touch with our Community Hub this week if you can, if you think you are going to need extra support over Christmas."

Cllr Helen Pighills, Vale of White Horse District Council's cabinet member for healthy communities, says: "It's been a difficult year and we know that for some people, Christmas could be a challenging time. Our Community Hub has been supporting people throughout the pandemic. Similarly, the team has been signposting those in crisis to other charities, support groups and agencies who can provide ongoing support. Lots of those organisations will also be taking a break over Christmas. If you think you may struggle over Christmas, please get in touch as soon as possible so that you can access the support you need."

The council's Community Hub will be running an emergency service for residents that need urgent food support from 24 December. The service will be available on Thursday 24, Tuesday 29, Wednesday 30 and Thursday 31 December, from 9am-5pm, by calling 07919 381 605.

From 4 January the hub will be operating as normal and will be available between 8.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays. In an emergency it's best to call the hub on 01235 422600 but you can also email community support@southandvale.gov.uk.

Councillors vote to adopt South Oxfordshire Local Plan. Following a government Direction to progress the Local Plan 2035 through to examination and adoption, councillors at South Oxfordshire District Council have voted to adopt the plan.

Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson, Cabinet Member for Planning at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "We were faced with no real choice but to adopt the plan – there was a very real possibility of the government removing planning powers from South Oxfordshire if the plan was not adopted – and so councillors have done what they needed to do to keep the final say on planning matters in our district. "Thankfully, we've been able to make improvements to the plan we inherited – something that we have consistently fought for alongside our residents over many months and throughout the inspection process. It is not the plan of our choosing but having a plan in place that we have successfully managed to improve will help to protect South Oxfordshire from speculative, unplanned developments." During the examination stage of the plan, the council helped identify changes, some of which fed into the Planning Inspector's final list of Main Modifications. The changes include an ambitious new carbon reduction policy which will be the joint top policy on eco-building standards in Oxfordshire. It will require buildings to be at least 40 per cent better than current building regulations, stepping up to 50 per cent in 2026 and zero carbon homes by 2030.

The adopted plan identifies locations for housing, retail and employment land as well as infrastructure required to support this growth, and policies in the plan will now be used as the starting point to help make decisions on planning applications in the district. The council's focus will now be on ensuring that the development sites in the plan come forward in the most appropriate way possible. Cllr Simpson emphasised: "Moving forward we need to ensure the issues that are important to our residents and communities and are set out in our Corporate Plan – like tackling the climate emergency, looking after local biodiversity and nature, and finding ways to provide genuinely affordable housing – are taken into consideration when planning applications are decided locally."

Local Plan Personal comment. I am very disappointed after all the hard work that we put in together to get Chalgrove Airfield out of the Local Plan that the Inspector left Chalgrove in it despite acknowledging the obstacles which still exist to the development being able to go ahead. I was one of those who voted against the Local Plan at the SODC meeting on December 10th. My thanks to all those in Chalgrove Ward who objected to the plan. The fight is not over and we now have to

concentrate on getting the actual Homes England planning application refused by the SODC Planning Committee.

Council services over Christmas and New Year. This year the council is closed from 5pm on Wednesday 23 December until 9am Monday 4 January. There will be access to emergency support and services during that time.

Community Hub. The councils' dedicated service for people who need urgent help, and have no other support because of Covid-19 will be available on an emergency basis on:

24 December from 9am-5pm

29–31 December from 9am-5pm

You can contact the Community Hub by calling 07919 381 605

They will reopen at 9am on Monday 4 January.

If you need support, do not wait until the last minute – call and ask for help now.

For more information on how you can find more help and support, please see the Community Hub page on our website southoxon.gov.uk/communityhub

Waste collections. Our colleagues at Biffa are on hand between Christmas and New Year to answer your waste collection queries

Please call them on 03000 610610

8.30am – 3pm 24 December

8.30am – 5pm on 29 and 30 December

8.30am – 3pm on 31 December

For information about changes to your Christmas waste collections please head to our Christmas waste webpage www.southoxon.gov.uk/christmaswaste

If bad weather means your bin is not emptied, please leave it out for up to three days and we will try and catch up with collections.

Housing. Any emergency homelessness calls out of hours are received by the council's out of hours service: (24/7 when the offices are closed).

The number to call for South Oxfordshire is 01235 422410 or for the Vale of White Horse, 01235 422420

Emergency Situations. There are details of what to do and who to contact during an emergency on our website: southoxon.gov.uk/emergency-situations

Covid-19. For information and advice on what to do if you have Covid-19 symptoms, the NHS website has more details <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

The government website has up to date information with details about the rules under Tier 2, which we are currently following in Oxfordshire and forming your Christmas bubble:

General coronavirus advice: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Tier information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>

Forming a bubble over Christmas: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>

Mental health and wellbeing. We know that this time of year can be hard for some people.

There is help available throughout the Christmas and new year period, please don't suffer alone.

We have details of [charities and organisations](#) you can speak to on our website.

David Turner

17th December 2020

