**District Councillor Update – 3 May 2022**

**Cllr Jo Robb, Cllr Lorraine Hillier**

**Homes for Ukraine**

SODC have redeployed staff to ensure Ukrainian refugees moving to the district, and the families supporting them, get the support and help that they need. South Oxfordshire residents have opened their homes to Ukrainians in large numbers and we are one of the top councils nationally in terms of welcoming Ukrainian refugees.

Please note, if you or a resident has applied to become a host and know the exact date of your guests’ arrival, or your guests have arrived and you are yet to be contacted please let me know or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk so that your case can be escalated and the support put in place.

Please also direct hosts or guests to the central website: [Ukraine | Oxfordshire County Council](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/ukraine) or the Oxfordshire Ukraine helpline: +44 1865 966 444 (opening hours 8.45am-5pm, Monday-Friday). You can also email: ukraineresponse@oxfordshire.gov.uk

**Accommodation**

The majority of the accommodation visits across the county have now either been carried out or booked in – the availability of hosts over Easter has played a part here.

The number of properties being rejected for overcrowding or poor housing conditions remains very low in every district. There are a small number of partially approved properties that are waiting for improvements. The number of properties where guests have arrived before the accommodation visit takes place is also very low. We will continue to book in visits for new host properties that enter the system over the next few weeks.

**Schools**

School places are being found for Ukrainian children. Applications for school places from guests are being considered alongside all other applications but the county council is working hard to ensure that places are offered as close as possible to where guests are living. Additional admissions staff have been recruited to help speed the process up.

We recognise that schools provide significant wrap around support to all children and are often the first port of call for identifying welfare concerns, so we are encouraging hosts and guests to register the Ukrainian children in their care for school places as soon as possible once they have arrived in Oxfordshire.

The county council has also written to the headteachers of all schools, reminding them of their responsibility to provide free school meals for any Ukrainian children that are placed with them. Officers will contact any individual schools where issues are identified to resolve these quickly.

**Health**

The government has recently published some [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrivals-from-ukraine-advice-for-primary-care/arrivals-from-ukraine-advice-for-primary-care) to help primary health care professionals assess and address the health needs of Ukrainian guests. Councillors may find some of the insight shared within this guidance helpful in understanding more about our guests.

SODC is to provide Bed and Breakfast accommodation in certain cases; we will now use capital funds to acquire property that can be used instead, with a targeted saving of £65,000 a year. The budget assigned £5 million from developer contributions (Section 106) for the purchase of housing for social rent.

**Joint Local Plan – First Consultation**

The first consultation on the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan has opened. You can access the interactive consultation webpage at: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2041/>

It is (in my view) an incredibly user-friendly and intuitive consultation and I encourage all residents, parish councils, community groups and businesses to take a look!

The consultation closes on 23 June.

The Plan is still in its very early stages but the feedback from this consultation will help guide its direction forward. Paper copies of the documents are available by telephoning: **01235 422425**. Return by post to: **Freepost SOUTH AND VALE CONSULTATIONS** (no stamp needed) or email: **haveyoursay@southandvale.gov.uk**.

**Five Year Housing Land Supply Rule Axed**

The Secretary of State for Housing announced last week that local authorities with up-to-date local plans will no longer be required to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. A document, released alongside the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, says the move is designed “to incentivise plan production further and ensure that newly produced plans are not undermined.” It will apply to all plans adopted within the last five year, including South Oxfordshire’s 2035 Local Plan.

All six leaders of Oxfordshire councils, led by South Oxfordshire’s leader, Cllr David Rouane, wrote to the Secretary of State in late January, to ask that the rule be abandoned for councils that have up to date Local Plans. <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/02/Oxfordshire-Leaders-5-year-land-supply-letter-.pdf>

It remains to be seen when the change will come into force.

**Revenue Grants for Voluntary Sector Organisations**

Voluntary organisations in South Oxfordshire whose work includes supporting young people, providing vital help and advice for residents, and protecting the environment have been awarded £667,992 in grant funding.

South Oxfordshire District Council awarded the funds to 22 organisations to help them improve the quality of life for the residents and communities they serve, whilst making sustainable plans for their future work.

Environmental charities including Earth Trust and River Thame Conservation Trust also received funds.

All applications for the grant were asked to consider how their organisation, activities and services are working towards addressing the climate emergency – a key priority as set out in our Corporate Plan.

Supporting vulnerable residents is also a focus of the funding, with local information and advice services awarded funds. Riverside Counselling, a charity based in Henley, with services also in Wallingford, Didcot and Berinsfield, were awarded £45,568 to help them provide counselling services to adults and young people from the age of 12. Thomley Hall Ltd in Thame, a charity for children and families with autism and complex needs, received £70,000 from the grant scheme.

**Henley Toilet Refurbishment**

The refurbishment of the public lavatories in the Greys Road carpark has been completed. The £145,000 project was funded with developer money and includes a “space to change” – a specially designed area with wheelchair accessible toilet, height adjustable adult-sized changing bench and hoist. There are now three new separate toilets – a ladies-only toilet and two unisex facilities. There is also a welfare area for carpark inspectors and a storage area.

**Update – Electric Vehicle Charing in SODC-owned carparks**

Unfortunately, due to the global shortage of semi-conductors, the opening of the electric vehicle charging points in the SODC-owned carparks has been delayed. I have requested that wherever possible, the fencing be removed to enable people to park in these spaces whilst we await the arrival of the parts required for the chargers. The officer has requested the contractors remove the fencing to enable parking where it is safe to do so. I will keep you updated.

**Tree Planting and Hedgerow Restoration – An Invitation to Farmers and Landowners**

Greener Henley spent the last tree planting season planting large numbers of trees and hedging plants in various locations around Skirmett and Hambledon. They are now keen to utilise their funds, expertise and army of volunteers to do hedgerow restoration, hedge laying and tree planting locally in the South Oxfordshire parishes near Henley.

For the forthcoming planting season (November-February), they are looking for landowners and farmers with land suitable for tree planting or hedgerow restoration, hedge laying or the planting of new native hedges to get in touch. Please could you let your local farmers and residents know about this opportunity. Those interested are invited to contact Patrick Fleming of Greener Henley for more information: Flemings5@googlemail.com or 07733 026906.

**Performance management Report for SODC- Q3 2021**

Please find the latest published performance management report for SODC around the 6 Corporate Plan objectives:

[**https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/Quarterly-Report-South-Q3-V5-draft-for-Cabinet-Members-Website.pdf**](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/Quarterly-Report-South-Q3-V5-draft-for-Cabinet-Members-Website.pdf)

**New Senior Management Staff**

New heads of Corporate Services and Housing and Environment have been appointed. Paul Fielding will join the councils on 8 July as new Head of Housing and Environment. He joins from Portsmouth City Council. He has experience leading in environment, waste management and housing. Mark Minion will join on 2 August from Bedford Borough Council as Head of Corporate Services. He has experience leading in digital transformation, culture chance, improving customer service and performance management. Both appointments were agreed unanimously by the Joint Staffing Committee.

**Consultations**

**Register your interest in council consultations**

You can get involved and have your say by registering on our consultation database of contacts that we use for engaging and consulting local communities on a variety of matters, from helping us to prepare a new council website to being formally consulted on new policies or plans.

If you want to receive notifications and updates of future council consultations, please register <https://survey.southandvale.gov.uk/s/consultationsignup/>

**Boundary Commission for England**

The Boundary Commission for England has arranged 32 public hearings for their second consultation on proposed new map constituencies in England.

Speaking slots are automatically reserved on the morning of the first day of the first hearing in each region for the official spokesperson of each of the qualifying political parties to present their party’s views.

All the details on how you can respond and to book a speaking slot can be found via the [Boundary Commission’s website](https://ebtk.co.uk/click/U0JrbEZhcExJL2R6WjJ1WFVTQWt6OVd6aFp3dHExNlZpZEJNRWEwUjg1SDIzWW83RXZ6blM3UUFKQT09/UlJ3b0VRPT0).

**Street naming consultation**

The government is asking people to comment on proposals to alter process for changing street names.  This includes replacing the current system with a single requirement for a residents’ vote on any changes to street names and some changes to regulations and statutory guidance for councils.  To find out more and to have your say visit <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/planning-reform-legislation/technical-consultation-on-street-naming/>

**Oxfordshire Climate Change survey**

The county council is running a survey to discover people’s understanding of and opinions about climate change across Oxfordshire. This is part of a countywide project we’re involved in to increase awareness of the impact of climate change and inspire behaviour change.

The survey results will be used to help develop a new online tool to help people across Oxfordshire find climate actions they can take which are relevant to them.

Residents can take part in the survey using these links: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/climate-change/survey_tools/survey14870>