

District Councillor Update – September 2023

Jo Robb and James Barlow

Fly Tipping

Fly tipping is a blight on our beautiful rural area that costs our council well over £60,000 a year to clean up. For reasons known only to itself, OCC has removed the reporting function for fly tips from the Fix My Street website.

However, you can report fly tipping by emailing: admin.southoxford@biffa.co.uk or by calling 03000 610 610 and will receive a swift response.

Biffa will then send out a team to clean up the waste while investigators from SODC's excellently named Envirocrime team will investigate. Our Envirocrime team have had excellent success prosecuting those who illegally dump waste. Only last month, an Oxford restaurant owner was fined £8000 plus costs for dumping waste at Wheatley.

Councillor Community Grants

Each South Oxfordshire district councillor has £5,000 to award to projects or services that offer community benefits in their ward area, budget permitting. We are especially keen to fund projects of greatest impact for residents, such as activities that protect and restore our natural world, promote action on the climate and nature emergency and improve economic and community well-being. Applications close on 20 October so please do promote this scheme in your communities and do get in touch if you have any questions. Our Grants team are extremely helpful.

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/>

£730k cash boost for rural economy across districts

SODC has secured £730 000 from the government's Rural Prosperity Fund to help improve the rural economy across the district. The fund can be used by any organisation with legal status to boost to projects such as creating rural business hubs, setting up community energy schemes and diversifying farm businesses beyond agriculture.

There are large sums available to support our local businesses, please do promote this scheme in your communities:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/business-and-economy/advice-for-businesses/rural-england-prosperity-fund/>

Capital Grants

Larger capital projects in the local area can benefit from capital grants of up to £75,000. The latest round of Capital Grants is launching soon so please do have a look at the website and, once again, please be sure to let your local community groups know about this scheme. Previous successful schemes have included the renovation of a cricket pavilion, a new roof for a Sea Scout hall, solar panels for a sports centre and retrofitting a church to create a brand new community hub in Wheatley.

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/capital-grants/>

Local Environment Fund: Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment

South Oxfordshire District Council has created a £50,000 fund to increase biodiversity and encourage public access to green spaces in the district.

In a new partnership with Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE), the money will be given as grants through TOE's Local Environment Fund to help boost local nature recovery efforts and reduce the impacts of climate change.

Community groups, town and parish councils, charities and non-profit organisations are invited to apply to TOE for funds to help look after South Oxfordshire's green spaces. Grants ranging between £1,000 and £15,000 can be used for tree and hedgerow planting or restoring community orchards, ponds, and nature-rich meadows.

Grants could also be used to improve access to nature for the public to enjoy and learn from. This could include replacing stiles with gates for better accessibility and also improving pathways.

The new fund uses money from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) paid by developer contributions.

Early applications are encouraged, so any South Oxfordshire based group involved in protecting and restoring their local environment should contact TOE to find out more.

<https://www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk/local-environment-fund>

Our landscapes and what's changing them – have your say

A new study has launched to better understand, protect and enhance the unique landscapes we enjoy and treasure across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. This study will help inform the councils' work towards the Joint Local Plan, which shapes future policies and help guide planning application decisions for the districts – something very important to us all.

We're invited to share what we love about local landscapes and what we think is changing them. On a new interactive map, we can add comments on different landscapes and places

we value. This feedback will help our council understand the local landscapes, what should be done to maintain them.

<https://south-and-vale-landscape-character-assessment-luc.hub.arcgis.com/>

New Council Headquarters – Comment by 8th September

Residents, business and organisations across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts are invited to have their say on proposals for a new building in Didcot, which will include office space acting as the councils' shared headquarters.

South Oxfordshire District Council has submitted a planning application for the building, and the plans are now available to view online and for people to leave their comments.

The district council's own Planning department will determine the planning application. As such, the council has been observing strict and careful internal procedures to ensure the Planning officers involved in reviewing the application are independent from council staff working on the project.

The application will ultimately be debated and determined in a public meeting of the council's politically representative Planning committee. The comments made during the planning application consultation will be presented as part of the report being considered at that committee meeting.

A current masterplan for the wider Didcot Gateway site will support the council's planning application. The masterplan was commissioned to set out principles and requirements that ensure all development on the site is of a consistent and high quality, and to ensure it adheres to the broader garden town principles and priorities for Didcot. Homes England owns a large section of the site and has previously submitted a planning application for 144 residential dwellings. Homes England's planning application will also be supported by the current Didcot Gateway masterplan. If you have any comments on the Homes England application or elements of the Homes England design within the masterplan, please view the detail and respond to that separately through the Homes England planning application webpage.

<https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P22/S0491/O#exactline>

River Thames Bathing Water Status Application at Wallingford

There is an open consultation on this for us all to have our say on an application for Bathing Water Status in Wallingford. Bathing Water Status requires the EA to monitor water quality for faecal bacteria and to make information on water quality public so that residents and visitors can make a more informed choice about whether or not to swim. It also gives communities greater powers to force polluters to clean up their act.

Please respond and give your views here:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=7akz1zsZGk-lsdAaYSTR_rRzvStYi89MizBjUKLIP3JUNkxYSDFMWTZFOVhTRk9TMzFPUzNISURHRy4u

It has been wonderful to note that water quality at Wallingford Beach has been Good or Excellent for the whole of the summer. You can learn more about the project here:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a012b2c0795d41c3b8cc69b5fd2c43ef>