

South Oxfordshire District Councillor's Report – September 2017

Planning Matters

Thames Farm Planning Appeal

Recently we lost the Appeal against our refusal of Planning Permission for this site, notwithstanding the existence of a Neighbourhood Plan and our view that we have more than 4 years supply of land. The Inspector's calculation was that we had 2.998 years (17.6 hours short of the required 3 year supply under the Minister's Written Ministerial Statement!). We believe that his notice contains legal errors and so we will be challenging his decision in the courts.

Neighbourhood Plans

Good news! We are extending the current district grant support to community groups preparing revised neighbourhood plans. The amount of grant support available is as follows:

- Market Towns £15,000
- Larger Villages £10,000
- Smaller and Other Villages £5,000

Community groups seeking to revise their neighbourhood plans need to submit a statement to explain why a review of their neighbourhood plan is necessary, alongside a project plan with associated costings. Find more information on the neighbourhood grant support email the policy planning team.

Modern Slavery - speak up

You may have seen in the news recently that some members of a traveller site in Lincolnshire have been convicted for running a slavery ring. Vulnerable people were forced to carry out work for little or no pay and live in squalid conditions over many years.

This case highlights that modern slavery can happen anywhere and we all have a responsibility to report anything that looks suspicious and could relate to this kind of exploitation.

Our community safety team has put together a short guidance note to help you recognise signs of possible modern slavery.

You can read the note here by copying and pasting the link. <http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=ee506f6118&e=eda6ce4f57>

New waste and recycling trucks

Some of our new waste and recycling trucks are already making their way round the districts.

This should help to alleviate some of the disruption caused by the old vehicles. The rest of the new £6.5m fleet will be in place by 2 October and will be covered in eye-catching designs to encourage recycling.

With the new fleet, there'll be a change to the way our waste is collected. At present, food waste and recycling (or rubbish) is collected in separate compartments within the same truck. When the full fleet is here, these collections will be by two separate vehicles – one for food waste, another for recycling or rubbish. This will not affect collection days or how you use your bins.

Read the press release we issued about the new vehicles here; <http://southandvale.us8.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=6b6be4bd99&e=eda6ce4f57>

Council tax discount review

Reminder; Over the next few weeks we will be checking that everyone who currently claims a 25 per cent single person discount on their council tax is entitled to do so.

This review will involve us working with credit reference agencies to check that our records are accurate and that people are only receiving the discounts they are entitled to.

We will be encouraging anyone that currently receives a discount to contact us if they're unsure about their entitlement to avoid any action being taken at –

sodc.counciltax@secure.capita.co.uk / 0345 302 2313

This is part of our continuing work to prevent and detect fraud on behalf of our residents.

Look out for your yellow letter

Please remind people to keep a look out for a yellow letter arriving in the post.

The yellow letter, which is going to all residents, explains that we need confirmation of who is currently living at their property so we have the correct information on who is eligible to vote.

As soon as the letter arrives, they should visit household.reponse.com to confirm or update their details. We still need them to respond even if their details are correct.

It would help us greatly if you could encourage others to do this to avoid us having to send out reminders and to help save money. We've launched an awareness campaign to encourage people to look out for the letter and to respond as quickly as possible.

Housing team award

You might remember that our housing team was recognised as one of the country's top performers by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS).

This followed a detailed review of our advice services where we scored 80 per cent against an average of 69 - putting us in the top eight councils in the country. The review checked that the advice and support we give to our residents is provided in a targeted, effective and efficient way.

The team has now been presented with their Bronze Award certificate and are already working towards the Silver Award.

Leisure

Henley swimmers to benefit from changing area refurbishment

Swimmers at Henley Leisure Centre will benefit from a major upgrade to their changing area this year, thanks to South Oxfordshire District Council.

The planned refurbishment will significantly improve the environment, with the pool-side changing rooms and toilet areas being refurbished throughout.

There will also be new changing cubicles, lockers and vanity units, while new LED lighting will also be installed to help improve the environment and reduce the amount of energy the building uses.

Work on the changing area is expected to start in November and will take around eight weeks to complete. During this time, the swimming pool and all other facilities will remain open.

Cllr Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Leisure at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "The refurbished area will provide a much better changing environment for swimmers at Henley Leisure Centre. This investment is part of our ongoing commitment to provide the best leisure facilities for all our residents across South Oxfordshire."

Didcot Wave

South Oxfordshire District Council is to invest £100,000 into Didcot Wave for essential maintenance and improvement works.

Swimmers will benefit from refurbishment work to the poolside shower area and improvements to the changing area and changing cubicles, including new benches.

Essential maintenance will be carried out to improve the flow of rain water from the roof of the building with repairs to the gym roof and gullies.

Parts of the swimming pool air handling unit will also be upgraded and the lighting in the pool hall will be improved.

CLlr Lynn Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Leisure at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We are committed to providing quality leisure facilities for our residents. This essential work will provide swimmers at Didcot Wave with improved changing and shower facilities, while also ensuring that the building is better protected from bad weather.”

New pay and display machines for district council car parks

Motorists using district council car parks in South Oxfordshire will benefit from the use of new pay and display machines.

Following a successful trial, the new machines have been installed. They will allow payment by credit and debit card and also accept coins, including the new £1. Old £1 coins will continue to be accepted until they cease circulation on 15 October.

Motorists will also still be able to pay by mobile phone via the Connect Cashless system.

When using the new machines motorists will need to insert their vehicle registration on the key pad when paying to park.

The new machines will be much cheaper and easier to maintain than the current stock which is a number of years old. The system will be powered by solar panels making it much cheaper and greener to run and, where possible, will be installed into the existing machine holders to save waste.

CLlr David Nimmo-Smith, Cabinet Member for the 5 Councils Partnership and Corporate Services Contracts at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “The new machines introduce debit/credit card payments to our car parks for the first time which will be a great help for those who don’t like to carry change around. Using solar panels means we’re making another small contribution to reducing the environmental impact of the council.”

Superfast broadband update

Our work with the 'Better Broadband for Oxfordshire' programme to deliver superfast broadband to our districts is on track to complete later in the year. To date take up of superfast broadband has been 47 per cent across Oxfordshire, one of the highest take up rates in the country.

To find out progress and coverage in your local area copy this link;

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=31f67f955b&e=eda6ce4f57>

For those areas not covered by the programme, we have been in discussions with a number of wireless providers about addressing the remaining gaps of 1,822 premises in South. The county has launched a scheme for communities to co-fund broadband partnerships. Copy this link for more information.

<http://southandvale.us8.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=33bec1cf8b5523ad47c7183a0&id=9c68fa4265&e=eda6ce4f57>

We've sent updates on the superfast broadband for Oxfordshire programme to all parish councils and district councillors. If you haven't seen a copy or would like further information please contact Suzanne Malcolm, Economic Development Manager, by email suzanne.malcolm@southandvale.gov.uk or telephone 01235 422217.