**District Councillors’ Report**

**6 October 2019**

**Cllr Robin Bennett**

**Public Toilets**

I have been in touch officers regarding the Dorchester public toilets. The cleaning service contract (currently with Healthmatic) is up for renewal next year. As a letter we received mentions, the local parish council took on Watlington toilets with annual payments from South Oxfordshire District Council and something similar may be negotiable at Dorchester if the parish council is interested. The current SODC property budget does not allow for any major improvements at the toilets and there is nothing planned on that front, although it is recognised they provide an important service for walkers on the Thames path and visitors to the Abbey.

**Roadway at Belcher Court/Martins Lane**

I have been in touch with planning officers about the uneven joins between the new roadway and the footpath / Martins Lane. County highways are following up on the issue.

**Emerging Local Plan 2034**

Cabinet at South Oxfordshire District Council has recommended that councillors vote to withdraw the council’s emerging Local Plan 2034 from examination and begin work on an ambitious new Local Plan.

Cabinet debated the issues at a public meeting at the council’s offices in Milton Park on Thursday 3 October and agreed to make a recommendation in a motion to Council, that will be considered and voted on by councillors at the full Council meeting on Thursday 10 October.

The motion sets out Cabinet’s reasons for recommending full Council withdraw the plan, an approach which they believe is in the best interests of South Oxfordshire residents.

The reasons given in the motion are:

* *the uplift above the standard method from 627 homes to 775 homes a year is excessive, and the existence of the Growth Deal should not be used as a justification for this uplift*
* *the overall supply of homes in the Local Plan period is considered excessive as it is over 5,000 homes greater than the need identified for South Oxfordshire, even allowing provision for Oxford City’s unmet housing need.*
* *the Local Plan does not give sufficient weight to responding to the climate emergency that we face as recognised by the decision of Council of 11 April 2019*
* *concerns about site selection issues including:*
  + *that the scale of Green Belt release is not justified*
  + *flawed site selection having regard to the sustainability and deliverability of strategic allocations*
* *concerns about the impact of the housing mix delivery and density policy*

Cllr Sue Cooper, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We have considered the detailed matters relating to the Local Plan long and hard over the past few months and I’m pleased that we’re making a clear, decisive and strong recommendation to councillors. In making this recommendation, my Cabinet has sought to do the right thing, not the easy thing, and we will continue to work positively and constructively in the best interests of all South Oxfordshire residents while also tacking the climate emergency, which we have an enormous responsibility to address.”

**Grants**

The Councillor Grant Scheme remains open for applications. Under the scheme, Councillors can award between £250 and £5000 to a project - examples might include new play equipment, installation of solar panels or accessibility improvements for a community facility. Applicants CAN approach more than one councillor if their project supports residents across a larger area. Projects must be complete within 12 months of the award decision. The scheme closes on **10 January 2020**.

Apply through the website: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants)

There will be information soon on the separate Capital Grants scheme.

Feel free to contact me any time with any District Council concerns or matters:

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