**Coronavirus response**

The newly established Community Hub at SODC has been extremely active in supporting vulnerable residents over the past couple of months. The Hub’s current opening hours are 9am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday and closed on Sundays. We are very proud of the way SODC staff have stepped up to the challenge and have responded to the new demands being placed on them.

**Virtual meetings and Local Plan**

SODC’s first virtual meeting took place successfully on 28 May, and it’s great for transparency and openness that you can now watch pretty much all official council meetings online. Try it if you’ve run out of options on Netflix! Find the links and timetable on the SODC website.

It has now been confirmed that the Examination in Public of the local plan will also be held virtually, starting on July 14th, and we’re just awaiting confirmation that this too will be streamed live. Proposed changes to the plan are being drafted by some councillors, including me, for submission to the inspector. It will be up to him to accept or reject them. The council is still under the legal direction of Secretary of State Robert Jenrick to push this controversial plan through.

**Adapting our roads to accommodate safe cycling and walking**

It is clear that our narrow pavements and car-oriented roads are simply unsafe for an increase in bicycle traffic and social distancing. Much of the focus so far has been on the more urban areas, including Oxford, but we would like to see this vision extended to our villages and towns.

There’s a website called [www.widenmypath.com](http://www.widenmypath.com) where you can submit a suggestion for improvements to be made to an existing pavement or cycle path. Apparently it is monitored by OCC, so worth using!

Recent air quality measurements show clearly the impact road traffic has on levels of air pollution, with a massive drop in Nitrogen Dioxide levels during the lockdown, by more than half in places like Wallingford.

**Support for Local Businesses**

We have been processing applications for the new Discretionary grants fund, aiming to support small businesses which were not eligible for the earlier rounds of funding, and we continue to push for funding for those who are still missing out on support. Further information is available at <https://www.svbs.co.uk>.

**Diversity and inclusion**

Leader of SODC Sue Cooper has written an open letter highlighting the approach to diversity in our district, in light of recent events in the US and here in the UK, saying: “we practice equality, fairness and inclusion. Through many of our services we work hard to ensure marginalised and isolated members of communities get all the support they need.”

**Dorchester celebrated for Bike Week by cycle champion** **Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye**:

“My favourite route at the moment is from Culham to Dorchester-on-Thames.  Although the path does need some attention in parts, it’s an easy going 10-mile round trip and feels safe because of the cycle path. This journey has been even more enjoyable of late because fewer vehicles are on the road and, although the ride takes you along a main road, the cycle path sits between open fields on both sides.  It’s so lovely to arrive at the beautiful and calm Dorchester cemetery, where my mother is buried.  I stay for a while and enjoy the surroundings before I head back to enjoy my return journey.”