It’s been a very busy time at South Oxfordshire District Council, both with normal activities and work supporting residents and businesses through the pandemic.

We recently took the decision to build the new offices for SODC (and Vale of White Horse District Council) in Didcot, on land owned by the council opposite the station. Although the intention had previously been to rebuild on the site of the former offices in Crowmarsh, which were destroyed by an arson attack a few years ago, changes in work patterns caused by the Coronavirus pandemic have meant that a smaller office is required, with many staff welcoming the chance to work from home for at least part of their week. That means the site, part of an area known as “Didcot Gateway” that has awaited development for some years, has become a viable option for the new office. The move will enable the council to move on from the expensively-rented temporary office at Milton Park into a modern, sustainable location with better environmental standards and public transport access.

We’ve been searching for the right use for this site for a long time, and this is the perfect solution, bringing a major employment site to the town centre, close to transport links and near to SOHA and Cornerstone, amongst others. It’s important we use public sector investment to achieve multiple benefits for the community.

We’ve also passed our ‘corporate plan’ through council, which will guide the activities of SODC from 2021-2024. The public consultation strongly backed our themes, including “protecting and restoring our natural world”, “openness and transparency”, and “action on the climate emergency”. It also retains investment in Berinsfield as a key priority for SODC.

As the Covid-19 situation continues to escalate, there is a lot of work happening to support residents and businesses. The initial business rates grant scheme to support businesses affected by the pandemic has now come to an end; in South Oxfordshire, our team awarded £25,615,000 to 1,933 businesses.

**Financial support for those affected by local lockdowns and NHS Test and Trace**

Residents receiving certain benefits may be eligible for £500 in financial support if they’re told to self-isolate through the NHS Test and Trace system. This is a government scheme, which we’re administering on their behalf. To claim, residents will need to apply within 14 days of their self-isolation period ending. There’s more information, including details on who is and isn’t eligible for this fund, on our website.

Businesses forced to close temporarily due to local Covid-19 lockdowns or targeted restrictions can also now apply for some financial assistance to support them during their closure.

**Please note - this support only becomes available when a local lockdown or targeted restrictions have been put in place.**

**Community Support helpline opening hours**

Residents can contact us by calling 01235 422600 or email [communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk)

Lines are open: 8.30am-5pm on Monday to Thursday; 8.30am-4.30pm on Friday

All information on our COVID-19 for individuals, community groups, volunteers and local business support can be found on our new website – [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk)

**Flood advice available**

As we head into winter, it’s worth making sure you are prepared for any adverse weather, particularly flooding. There’s lots of information on our websites to help homeowners, businesses and communities on flood prevention:  <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/flooding>