**District Councillor Report- Cllr Robin Bennett, June 2023**

**New administration and my role on the council 2023-4**

At the recent Full Council meeting, Cllr David Rouane was re-elected as Leader, and confirmed that the Lib Dem group will remain in partnership with the Green group and continue our successful joint administration at SODC. Having been re-elected as Green group leader for 2023-4, I am continuing in my role as Deputy Leader as well as Cabinet Member of Economic Development and Regeneration, and indeed there’s only one change to the cabinet, which should enable continuity and mean current plans are not interrupted.

**Our Community Hub team is here to help**

They can offer cost-of-living help, including access to food support and advice and signposting on a wide range of issues. A vital part of our work is the Homes for Ukraine scheme so can offer guidance and information for anyone curious about becoming a host for the Homes for Ukraine scheme or offering support to guests on this scheme.

If you’re struggling financially or just finding life difficult, we can help. Whether it’s practical support or just advice, please get in touch on 01235 422600 or via email, **communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk**

**Berinsfield Garden Village Steering Group**

This group meets regularly, including reps from SODC, OCC and Berinsfield Parish Council, as well as Ptarmigan, land promoters for the Mount Farm former airfield, which is allocated to provide 1700 new homes in the SODC local plan. We are looking at whether some ‘small interventions’ from our recent community facilities study can be put forward for funding from SODC’s Shared Prosperity Fund, we had updates on the Abbey sports centre improvements, and a presentation on possibilities for community-owned energy from Low Carbon Hub. There’s also a proposal for some outreach work in Berinsfield by Fusion Arts, and Citizens Advice Bureau are planning to run a Berinsfield drop in session.

**Help develop our local food action plans**

We’re calling for all local businesses, community growers, voluntary and community groups, food businesses and producers, and more to help us provide fairer, healthier and more sustainable local food systems for our districts. We recently helped launch the Oxfordshire Food Strategy with partners, and we’re also developing the South and Vale Food Action Working Group, which will work to shape local action plans. If you’d like to tell us about a local food-growing or related project email communityconnectors@southandvale.gov.uk.

**Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership**I’ve joined the Steering Group for this new group. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) brings together employers, business, education, community groups and local government working to share knowledge, expertise and resources to address some of our greatest challenges. The idea is to work together to create opportunities and benefits for all people within the county, and to tackle some of our region’s biggest problems to create a fairer environment where everyone can contribute and share in our success.
The Partnership has developed a charter and pledges to help individuals, companies and organisations to set out ways in which they will help create an inclusive economy for Oxfordshire.One if its early programmes is to spread the successful ‘Growing Minds’ pilot from Berinsfield to new areas. **I’m also keen to hear from local businesses who would like to sign up for the Charter or be part of this in any way.**

**Didcot Garden Party returns**

Didcot Garden Party is back this summer with a great selection of free activities for everyone to enjoy, from creative and arts activities to sport, yoga and live music.

The party starts on Saturday 22 July and will run through to the end of August.

The free activities will take place across the ‘garden town’ area, day and night, weekends, and weekdays, with key events happening at Cornerstone Arts Centre and in the town and surrounding village’s parks and community halls. The focus for this year’s party will be health, wellbeing and the environment.