

SODC ward councillor's report

Shiplake – 14th November 2022

Covid-19

The reliability of data on Covid cases is now much reduced following the end of test and trace. However national figures have shown falls in cases – contrary to what might be expected for this time of year.

At 5th November, **reported** cases in SODC were at a weekly rate per 100k of population of **36** (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th Jan) – a low level and one that has reduced - albeit that reporting may be incomplete. (Indeed Reading BC have ceased reporting their figures because of fears about accuracy.)

It is fair to note that it has been unseasonably warm and that cold weather has not yet set in. However there seems scope to hope that Covid will only be a modest problem this winter?

In Australia and New Zealand winter flu was more impactful and more virulent than normal and this may well transmit into the UK's winter season. Booster jabs for both Flu and Covid for over 50s and the vulnerable have been and are being rolled out through the autumn, before any winter peak.

SODC Constitution

SODC adopted a new constitution at its council on 13th October. The new constitution was broadly updated by Patrick Arran the officer who is the new head of Legal & Democratic, in conjunction with a working committee of councillors.

Community Governance

SODC's Community Governance committee met on 10th September. It confirmed some boundary changes arising from housing development; but nothing locally in this ward.

Motion re Didcot boundary and Great Western Park

Most of Didcot sits within South Oxfordshire, however a significant part of Great Western Park sits in Harwell parish in the Vale of White Horse District Council.

At its council on 13th October SODC agreed a motion that officers should write a report on the options to address matters and potentially to ask the Boundary Commission to consider a change to the border between SODC and VoWHDC. Where a settlement expands it is normal to consider arrangements where it all sits within one set of councils.

New CIL rates from 2023

SODC's proposals for increased CIL rates have completed inspection. They have now been approved by Cabinet and set for final approval by council on 8th December. There will be 3 zones of rates – these are:-

- Brownfield built areas of Didcot and Berinsfield (lowest rates)
- The south of the district south of a line just above Goring, up to Nettlebed and down across to Henley (highest rates)
- The rest of the District – excluding the Greenfield Strategic Sites in LP2035.

Subject to mix, it is estimated that these new rates might yield an extra c70%. It should however be noted that the pay-out effect will take a while to work through the system since pay-out comes after some delay following the triggering of charges; so the full effect may be (say) by 2024.

In addition SODC are to adopt a SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) to provide detailed guidance on the application of Section 106 obligations. On Strategic Sites, where a great deal of infrastructure is required, only s106 will apply (no CIL). However by exception some S106 will apply to deal with special issues on other sites – alongside CIL. (E.g. if exceptional highways or education needs are triggered by a large or unusual site or other special factors apply.)

“Call for Sites” for new Joint Local Plan – the results are in

SODC has published the results of our “Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change”, part of the process in creating the next Joint Local Plan. This process is usually called a Call for Sites, but the name was amended to encourage sites that could have community and environmental uses, such as public open spaces or renewable energy.

The Comms team has created an informative short video to explain what the Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change is and what happens next. [You can find the video on our Youtube channel.](#)

It's important to note these are not proposals the Council is making for development. The Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change does not grant planning permission to any site submitted or confirm that the site will be suitable for development. You can view the full results on SODC's [interactive Call for Land and Buildings Available for Change website.](#)

You do not need to contact anyone to say whether you support or object to these sites. SODC will assess the submissions on a range of environmental, heritage and physical constraints to determine their potential 'suitability', 'availability' and 'achievability'. Sites that may be suitable for further consideration will be identified through the Joint Local Plan work, and will be consulted upon.

Around Shiplake, proposed sites include ones outside Lower Shiplake and further off large ones around the north and east of Reading.

You can find out more about the Joint Local Plan on the [South/Vale](#) websites.

The Queen's Canopy

Following the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth, and in accordance with the wishes of the King, the [Queen's Green Canopy](#) initiative will be extended to the end of March 2023 to give people the opportunity to plant trees to honour Her Majesty. SODC is creating a record of all the trees planted across the district for The Queen's Green Canopy and Communities are asked to send pictures of their planted trees into SODC at communications@southandvale.gov.uk.

More information can be found at: southoxon.gov.uk/greencanopy

Councillor Grants Scheme

As one scheme closes, another one opens! The second round of the Councillor Grant scheme opens in November – see www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

SODC Housing Delivery Strategy

SODC are in the process of developing a housing delivery strategy. This will develop over time, but includes a wide analysis of housing challenges, options to assist suitable responses including community-led housing, deployments of s106 and scope to address gaps of provision.

Ukrainian refugees

Just to note that the war goes on and that many refugees in the UK are approaching the end of the committed six months with their hosts. In order to support hosts with cost of living pressures, councils across Oxfordshire are proposing to use some of the central government funding to increase the amount paid to hosts per month.

AONB extension

A brief for the work required has been developed and has been shared with suppliers. Costing and delivery schedules are being discussed. The next meeting is pencilled in for 29th November.

Leigh Rawlins

District Councillor