

SODC ward councillor's report

Shiplake – 12th June 2023

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 3rd June 2023, **reported** cases in SODC were at a weekly rate per 100k of population of **6** (it peaked at 1,504 on 6th January 2022) – a very low level - albeit that reporting may be somewhat incomplete. (Many don't report it.)

Separately, there has been significant levels of flu causing some references to a “twindemic” in terms of absences and pressures on the NHS. (Such pressures are also, of course, complicated now by pay disputes.)

District elections 4th May 2023

Just to confirm, although the Lib Dems won enough seats to control SODC, the partnership with the Green party councillors will continue.

Riverside outdoor pool, splash pad and campsite

The pool is now open. There is a new cover for the pool overnight to enable the water temperature to stay warmer which will reduce energy use from the pool heaters.

The campsite opened to visitors on 1 May after £150,000 refurbishment of the washroom area (and now new guttering too). Campers will be able to visit the site and enjoy the new facilities until the 30 September.

The splash pad should be ready for use from July following its renovation currently taking place and paid for by CIL funding (Community Infrastructure Levy). The old surface is being replaced with a new brightly coloured soft rubber crumb finish. The new look pad will have exciting new features shooting out water from colourful columns. These will include sensor operated water jets, tall sprinklers, tipping buckets and water tunnels intended to provide everyone with hours of entertainment!

Following last year's success, the Swim Doctor will be back as will the weekly aqua aerobic sessions, plus Riverside will be open from sunrise to sunset for the summer solstice on 21 June.

The pool and splash pad will be open for the summer season until Sunday 3 September.

Great Big Green Week 10-18 June

This is a national celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. The idea is that we should all try to do something to make our world a little greener.

From 12 June residents will be invited to take part in a waste satisfaction questionnaire. Questions will cover waste collections, street cleansing as well as contact made with the council waste team and Biffa. Please do provide your feedback on the current waste service. This will help when SODC come to designing what will follow when the Biffa contract ends.

Also from 12 June there will be a consultation on a recently produced Air Quality Action Plan. These plans have to be reviewed and updated every 5 years or so.

The air quality in our AQMAs (Air Quality Management Areas) has improved greatly, probably because vehicles are less polluting, such that Wallingford and Watlington no longer have to be

declared as AQMAs. However, Henley is still so defined, mainly because of high levels of nitrogen oxides recorded in Duke Street.

Developing SODC's local food action plans

SODC is 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.

There was an event on Friday 9 June in Didcot to raise awareness of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy, which the councils adopted along with the other Oxfordshire councils and partners in December 2022. There was also be discussion on the development of the South and Vale Food Action Working Group, which will work with stakeholders and partners to shape new action plans. (So SODC and Vale of White Horse working jointly.)

Council grants now available for food banks and community larders

The voluntary food network – voluntary and community organisations such as food banks, food larders and community fridges for residents – plays a vital role supporting people, but demand for their help has surged as fuel and food costs escalate, particularly for everyday staples.* While demand continues to rise, voluntary food networks are seeing their supplies reduce due to a drop in donations from individuals and companies while also facing rising fuel and food costs themselves.

To help support the voluntary food network SODC is inviting community food groups to apply for a grant of £2,500 for essential supplies. The grants can be used to help pay for a variety of expenses including food, additional storage and energy bills.

The closing date for applications is midday Wednesday 28 June 2023.

For more information on the grant and details on how to apply go to our South Oxfordshire Food Network Grant Scheme page <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/food-network-grant-scheme/>

*Source: ONS Census data December 2022 and Oxfordshire County Council food cost of living data

Local planning cases

The White House/Poplar Eyot case is set to go to the planning committee. Willows Reach has gone to appeal. Updates on others have been requested.

Leigh Rawlins & Mike Giles

District Councillor