

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 13th May 2024

Joint Local Plan

There were some 1,200 responses to the “Reg 18” JLP consultation earlier this year – a strong and largely positive response. Analysis of the responses is proceeding. Later this year – perhaps in late October/early November - the next and final “Reg 19” version is likely to go to consultation, perhaps for Examination in Summer 2025 and Adoption late in that year.

AONB/“National Landscape” extension

Following submission, it is anticipated that Natural England’s public consultation may be around autumn/winter 2024 with a decision by the SoS DEFRA late in 2025.

SODC’s “Way Ahead” Action Plan

SODC is developing a new ‘corporate action plan’ (now named ‘Way Ahead’) that will shape the future priorities of the council. You can share your views on the proposed themes for the council online, until the 14th May.

Link:

<https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/policy-and-programmes/south-corporate-plan/>

The five themes are:

1. Action on climate change and nature recovery.
2. Inclusion, accessibility and accountability.
3. Thriving and healthy communities.
4. Homes and infrastructure that meet **local need**.
5. Financial stability and innovative transformation.

Housing enforcement

SODC has a new Housing Enforcement Policy to support residents as well as social housing landlords, private landlords, letting agents and tenants by setting out in a clear and transparent document the housing standards to be expected in the district. The policy also explains the enforcement approach to be taken against non-co-operative landlords.

SODC has a strong track record of engaging positively with landlords, the great majority of whom provide a good quality service to their tenants. However, where necessary, SODC will take robust action against rogue landlords who are unwilling to meet the required housing standards set out. This policy will help ensure a fair and consistent approach to housing enforcement within the district.

The policy supports SODC’s (“The Way Ahead”) plan to help provide homes and infrastructure that meet local needs. It also builds upon the work already being undertaken by SODC’s Private Sector Housing team to promote and maintain good housing standards.

New Taxi fares

SODC has agreed new Hackney carriage taxi fares to apply in the district. The new tariff sets a maximum hackney carriage fare and also outlines the time periods for when different costs apply. As a maximum tariff, drivers can choose to charge passengers a lower rate if they wish.

The new tariff only applies to Hackney carriage taxis and for their journeys within the district. It does not apply to private hire taxis, which people book in advance.

Small business training

SODC is supporting the [Help to Grow: Management Essentials course](#), a free online course with practical tips and resources for small business leaders. This course has been put together by the Department for Business and Trade. This “Essentials” course is the latest addition to the ‘[Help to Grow](#)’ toolkit - supporting UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The course is suited for leaders of newer or smaller SMEs, or those who are looking to explore the principles of business growth and management. Business leaders can access the course through the [Help to Grow website](#). Please help share this information with any small businesses who may benefit from it.

Changes to the SODC Garden Waste scheme (Brown bins).

SODC has been progressing changes to the way the garden waste subscription works. Last month the transition period began towards introducing a new permit scheme next year in April 2025.

When a customer’s invoice is due, they will receive information on the changeover, what to expect, and what they need to do in early 2025 if they wish to continue to receive the service from April 2025 onwards. If you have any queries – or if residents have questions, you can find out more here:

Link:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/garden-waste/garden-waste-scheme-changes/>

Wallingford Beach awarded “Bathing Water” status

Wallingford has just been officially awarded “Bathing Water” status by DEFRA.

This formally recognises the usage of the venue. Moreover it means that from May to September the Environment Agency will be required to test the water on a weekly basis and to display the results on site. A concomitant is that it raises the spotlight on Thames Water as it legally requires water companies to reduce raw sewage discharge in our rivers, improving their health and benefitting people and wildlife.. Hurrah!

Local Nature Recovery

Oxfordshire County Council has a free webinar on 8 May to present a summary of responses from local people on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This follows workshops and a survey in February and March. At the webinar you will hear the plans to

create biodiversity priorities and to then map areas for action across the county. Anyone can join. Sign up here: [Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) - Progress Summary Tickets, Wed 8 May 2024 at 18:00 | Eventbrite. To find out more about the local nature recovery strategy, visit the [county council's website](#).

No Mow May

Once again SODC will support "No Mow May" - after the success of the 'Let It Bee' trial last year. The Parks team is pushing ahead once again with a biodiversity-friendly land management programme, where grass is allowed to grow on sections of land that is owned or managed by SODC. For more information please see our grass cutting pages on the websites (Link: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/parking-roads-and-streets/grounds-maintenance/grass-cutting/>)

SODC (CIL) Grant Fund – EOIs **(Community Infrastructure Levy – Expressions of Interest)**

Across SODC, some £8m of bids were received against an available total pot of £750k. After a slew of rejections the remaining bids were reduced to a total of £2.9m.

So a lot of bids were rejected. Bids without a clear funding plan or with external and uncertain dependencies were simply rejected.

Clearly this tsunami of interest was beyond expectations. That said it will be important to understand the rationale as it was not clear at the outset that EOIs would be rejected without engagement. That said it must be clear that the small officer team was rather overwhelmed.

SODC Everyone Active Grants (£50k pot with £1k max per bid).

This is largely a first-come first served scheme.

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors