

SODC ward councillor's report – Shiplake - 10th February 2020

Local Plan

Sue Cooper's response has now been made – seeking a meeting for a pragmatic resolution. It can be found here:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Letter%20to%20Mr%20Jenrick%20in%20Response%20to%207%20Jan%20Letter.pdf>

The Secretary of State (SoS) Robert Jenrick has been out of the country for the Holocaust memorial, but before leaving gave a promise in the House of Commons to have a meeting with South Oxfordshire's leader. Next steps are awaited.

Meanwhile OCC have put forward a motion offering to take over South Oxfordshire's planning powers for their 11th February council. This is in line with input promoted to MHCLG.

In Wheatley there was a public meeting on 25th January attended by 250 or so people concerned by the threat to local democracy and excess development. Concern was also voiced about the direction of the Arc process and the future – if any of the Expressway.

Council Finances

SODC's budget process is underway. As noted previously because of the financial situation that was left difficult decisions are having to be made.

SODC has, together with Vale of White Horse with whom it shares officers and offices the lowest costs by some margin of the Oxfordshire district (and City) councils.

As noted before confirmation of changes to the New Homes Bonus aspect of council receipts from central government will make things even more difficult in 2020-21.

Given statutory obligations and restraints on council tax increases, there is limited scope. However proposals are coming forward and will be decided at a forthcoming SODC council meeting on 20th February.

Amongst these are proposed changes to Neighbourhood Plan grants from SODC, although SODC will continue to provide strong support from officers in the dedicated NP planning team. UK government has cut and restricted grants to SODC and the future for 2020-21 onwards is unclear. SODC have been an exception in giving NP grants. However, government have increased funding for NPs to claim directly. Officers will help with claims to these and overall the belief is that NP groups will be able to access the funds that are needed. SODC will continue to bear the costs of examination and referendum.

Chair's charity concert

Parish Councillors and residents may be interested to know that the Chair of SODC, Cllr David Bretherton, is hosting a charity concert on Friday 7 February to help raise funds for his two chosen charities - Earth Trust and Red Kite Family Centre in Thame.

Taking place at Cornerstone, the evening will be full of variety and plans to showcase local talented people including singers and dancers, as well as a few surprises for an evening of fun. Tickets cost £12 per person, £10 for concessions and are available from [Cornerstone's website](#).

South Oxfordshire – new council offices at Crowmarsh

On 13th February there will be an exhibition at SODC's temporary Milton Park offices concerning the draft design concept for the new building at Crowmarsh to replaced those lost to fire.

Climate Emergency

South Oxfordshire District Council's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) met on 28 January.

The committee has recommended a one-year programme of priorities be approved by Council to help start achieving their aims of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2025 and a carbon neutral district by 2030.

Leigh Rawlins
District Councillor