

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 14th September 2026

Government “pauses” Local Government Reorganisation review

The government announced on 7 September that it will review its earlier decisions on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across England, with implications for the future of councils in Oxfordshire. South Oxfordshire District Council said it had done everything asked of it in preparing for reorganisation, and that every pound and officer hour spent on a process - now paused - could otherwise have gone toward housing, social care, roads and planning.

Council Leader Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers said the announcement had caused further uncertainty and eroded trust in government, and confirmed the council “will now do our utmost to understand the way forward for our district.”

There will now be district council elections in May 2027 as a result.

Consultation opens on the next Joint Local Plan (JLP2)

A scoping consultation on South Oxfordshire's second Joint Local Plan (covering the period to 2045) opened on 8 September and closes on 29 September 2026 at 11.59pm. This early stage asks residents, businesses and the planning industry what the new plan should contain and how the council should approach future engagement — it does not yet cover specific policies or sites.

New government rules mean the council must begin work on this next plan while its first Joint Local Plan is still being examined (hearings ran in June 2025 and July 2026, with a further stage expected this autumn). Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson, Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, encouraged residents to have their say early.

Have your say by 29 September: www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLP2-scoping-consultation

Background: www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLP2-scoping

Check your voter registration details by 2 October

The council is contacting more than 88,000 properties this September asking residents to confirm their voter registration details. Look out for an email from electoral.services.south.oxfordshire.and.vale.of.white.horse.district.councils@notifications.service.gov.uk and respond promptly — this is especially important if you've moved home recently.

Households can respond in a few minutes at HouseholdResponse.com/SouthAndVale using the property codes provided. Deadline: 2 October. To register to vote, visit gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Council presses Oxford Growth Commission to put communities first

Ahead of the Oxford Growth Commission's final recommendations, expected this autumn, Council Leader Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers wrote to Commission Chair Neale Coleman CBE on 30 July setting out South Oxfordshire's priorities for growth. The letter welcomed the Commission's focus on infrastructure but stressed that new development must be matched by investment in roads, GP surgeries, wastewater capacity and affordable housing.

The council argues its priority should be unblocking delivery of homes already allocated in its Local Plan, rather than allocating further sites, and highlighted the importance of supporting market towns and villages across the district rather than concentrating growth in one place.

Councillor Community Grant open for applications

The latest round of the Councillor Community Grant launched on 17 August, with £270,000 available to support community projects that help residents and build healthy, thriving communities across the district. Councillors are encouraged to make local groups aware of the funding.

Application deadline: midday, 4 December. Full criteria are available on the council's grants page - <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/councillor-community-grants/>

Pilot scheme launched to remove untaxed vehicles

The council has launched a three-month pilot giving it DVLA powers to remove untaxed vehicles from public roads and other eligible public land across South Oxfordshire, with offending vehicles taken to a secure pound. The pilot will test how the scheme works in practice and assess demand.

The scheme supports the council's commitment to clean, safe and attractive communities. See the Q&A sheet on the council website for more detail -

<https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/sites/2/2026/09/South-Untaxed-Vehicle-QA.pdf>

Extra rates relief confirmed for South Oxfordshire pubs

The Lib Dem council has confirmed an extra 15% business rates relief for pubs across South Oxfordshire.

More information: [Cheers to South Oxfordshire pubs](#)

Lessons learnt from Land Charges system delays

A report published on 9 September set out the causes behind this year's delays to the council's new Land Charges system, and was reviewed by the Joint Scrutiny Committee on 7 September. The committee identified improvements needed in project governance, risk management, communication and access to specialist expertise for future systems, while recognising the effort of staff and partners in stabilising the service. SODC has apologised to any residents who were impacted.

In other news, South Oxfordshire's Microsoft 365 migration project has been shortlisted in the Most Successful Cloud Migration category at the Computing Cloud Excellence Awards 2026.

Neighbourhood Planning: Eye and Dunsden update

The Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan is currently undergoing independent examination. A publicity period on an addendum to the Landscape Character Assessment ran from 12 August and concluded on 3 September; details remain on the Neighbourhood Plan web page.

To check the status of any neighbourhood plan across the district, use the council's interactive Neighbourhood Planning map, which is updated regularly -

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/97627b27699b4fe3ae94adf3cf37e5d2>

Equalities Roadshow visiting South Oxfordshire markets

The council's Equalities Roadshow is back for a second year, giving residents and businesses the chance to speak with officers about equality and the services on offer locally. The roadshow began on 7 September and continues at markets through October.

Remaining South Oxfordshire dates:

- 25 September – Wallingford Market, 9am–2pm
 - 13 October – Thame Market, 8am–2.30pm
 - 22 October – Henley Market, 9am–2pm
- To get involved, email equalities@southoxon.gov.uk

Upgraded mapping system now live

The council has upgraded its GIS Mapping System, making it easier to find local information such as planning applications, conservation areas, listed buildings, Green Belt land, local nature reserves and wildflower areas.

Explore the map via 'Maps of public data' on the South Oxfordshire District Council website - <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/data-hub/maps-of-public-data/>

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors