

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 13th July 2026

Changes to Planning Committees

As noted last month, from **31 October 2026**, new national planning rules will change how planning applications are decided. More applications will be determined by planning officers, with only those raising significant local planning, economic, social or environmental issues being considered by the Planning Committee.

South Oxfordshire District Council will shortly hold an online briefing for town and parish councils to explain the changes and answer questions. Please look out for details.

Land Charges System Upgrade

The council's new Planning system is now live, and the upgraded Land Charges system is expected to launch shortly following final testing on 13th July.

SODC offer sincere apologies to everyone who has been affected by the downtime of South Oxfordshire's Local Land Charges service. This has caused uncertainty and problems for residents, businesses and professionals who rely on these searches. There have been technical problems. Following final testing, I am pleased to confirm that the new system will go live on Monday 13 July.

The new platform replaces technology that had been in place for more than 30 years and brings together several interconnected systems, including planning, mapping and environmental information. Additional testing has been essential to ensure searches are accurate, as these are relied upon for important property transactions and errors could have significant legal consequences.

The council's immediate priority is now to clear the backlog of searches, and additional resources are being put in place to process outstanding requests as quickly as possible (3 weeks). If you have already submitted a search request by email, **please do not submit it again** through the new portal, as existing requests will continue to be processed by the team.

As elected members will also be reflecting on the implementation of this project to understand what lessons can be learned and whether the disruption could have been reduced.

Anyone wishing to use the new system will need to register for an account. More information is available on the council's Land Charges webpages - <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-land-charges/how-to-register-for-land-charges-searches-with-the-new-online-portal/>

Joint Local Plan 2045

Work has begun on the **Joint Local Plan 2045**, which will guide future development across South Oxfordshire. This follows new government requirements to prepare the next local plan while the current Joint Local Plan is still being examined.

More information is available on the Joint Local Plan 2045 webpage - <https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/joint-local-plan-2045-jlp2/>

Community Governance Consultation

Residents are invited to comment on proposed changes to parish arrangements, including:

- increasing the number of parish councillors in Ewelme and Stoke Row
- warding changes in Didcot, Henley and Thame
- boundary changes between Shirburn and Pyrton, and between Thame and Great Haseley

The consultation closes on **30 July 2026**.

More information: <https://southoxon.gov.uk/CommunityGovernance>

Capital Grants Still Available

Community organisations, including town and parish councils, can still apply for up to **£75,000** through the Capital Grant Scheme for projects that improve life in South Oxfordshire.

Applications close on **20 July**.

Find out more: <https://southoxon.gov.uk/grants>

Email: grants@southandvale.gov.uk

Support for Local Pubs

South Oxfordshire District Council is considering a **one-off 15% reduction in business rates** to help support pubs across the district. The proposal will be considered by Cabinet on **2 July**.

Pubs continue to face significant financial pressures despite the important role they play as community hubs, employers and part of the local economy. They have also faced particularly high increases in rating revaluations at a time when pressured by other cost and tax increases and with customers constrained by cost of living challenges.

Council Leader Maggie Filipova-Rivers said the proposal is a practical step to support valued local businesses and communities.

Bin Collection Reminder

In the hot weather, collection days remain unchanged, but collection times may vary. Residents are asked to put their bins out by **6am**, or preferably the evening before where possible.

Youth Sector Grants

Local organisations supporting young people aged **8–25** can apply for grants of up to **£3,000** to strengthen their services.

Further information is available on the Oxfordshire Youth website.

Email: sectorsupport@oxfordshireyouth.org

Performing Arts Grant to support local arts and community wellbeing

Local arts organisations can apply for a share of £60,000 from South Oxfordshire District Council's Performing Arts Grant when applications open on Monday 20 July.

The funding supports arts and community projects that give residents across the district the chance to take part in the performing arts, bringing communities together, improving wellbeing and helping grow South Oxfordshire's arts scene.

Voluntary and community organisations can apply for grants of between £500 and £5,000. Funding can be used for projects such as festivals, concerts, dance lessons, accessible music sessions and equipment purchases. The deadline for applications is midday Wednesday 30 September 2026.

Link: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/performing-arts-grant-fund/>

E&D Neighbourhood Plan

The Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan is currently undergoing independent examination.

Further information is available on the Neighbourhood Plan webpage - <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/neighbourhood-plans/emerging-neighbourhood-plans/eye-and-dunsden/>

Electric Vehicle Charging

Oxfordshire is expanding its public EV charging network, with **1,500 new charging points** planned over the next two years. Community organisations will also have opportunities to host charging points at local venues such as village halls, community centres and sports pavilions.

Further information is available through Oxfordshire County Council - <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-moves-forward-with-programme-to-support-residents-without-private-parking-to-switch-to-evs/>

[Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins](#)

District Councillors