

SODC ward councillors' report

Shiplake – 9th March 2026

Government launches Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) consultation

Reminder: The Government has launched a **public consultation** on options for the future structure of councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The consultation runs for **seven weeks, from Thursday 5 February to Thursday 26 March 2026**, and will help inform decisions that could shape how council services are delivered for decades to come. South Oxfordshire District Council supports the proposal for **two unitary councils**, which it considers the most effective option for improving services, maintaining financial sustainability, responding to local communities and supporting economic growth.

Parish councils and residents are strongly encouraged to take part in the consultation, as a “once-in-a-generation opportunity” to reshape council structures and services.

Alongside this, South Oxfordshire and four other councils have outlined their proposal for two new unitary authorities covering Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, setting out how services could be delivered under a new structure while maintaining strong local representation.

Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to review the proposals and share their views as part of the consultation process.

⇒ Government consultation which is open to individuals, organisations and community groups:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/residents-urged-to-respond-to-government-consultation-on-once-in-a-generation-opportunity-to-change-local-councils/>

⇒ Two-unitary proposal:

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/five-councils-outline-how-a-two-unitary-proposal-would-reimagine-council-service-delivery-across-oxfordshire-and-west-berkshire/>

Shape the future of town and parish councils

Residents across South Oxfordshire are being invited by SODC to give their views on the future role of town and parish councils as part of a community governance review. Feedback will help shape how local councils represent communities and deliver services in the future.

⇒ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/democracy/south-oxfordshire-residents-invited-to-shape-the-future-of-local-town-and-parish-councils/>

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Grant Fund

The second round of the District **Community Infrastructure Levy Grant Fund** opened on Friday 30 January 2026, with **£750,000 available** to support local projects across South Oxfordshire. Grants of **£75,000 to £250,000** are available to town and parish councils and not-for-profit community organisations.

Funding is intended for projects that address infrastructure needs arising from development, such as community buildings, sports and cultural facilities, play areas and open spaces. Applications close at **5pm on 30 March 2026**, with further details available here:-

<https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/community-support/grants/community-infrastructure-levy-cil-grant-fund-further-information/>

New garden waste permits

Reminder: Existing garden waste permits for brown bins will **expire on 31 March 2026**.

Residents who wish to continue receiving **fortnightly garden waste collections from 1 April** will need to purchase a new permit. Sales will open in **mid-February**, and most residents will be able to buy their permit online via 'MyAccount' or at: <https://southoxfordshire.gov.uk/gardenwastepermit>

Residents who need assistance can contact Customer Services on **01235 422422**. When the new permit arrives, residents should keep their current sticker on the bin until the final March collection, then replace it with the new 2026/27 permit. Buying early ensures residents receive the full year of collections up to **31 March 2027**.

SODC Budget 2026-27

From leisure centres to flood protection, public toilets, community grants, affordable housing and much more, South Oxfordshire District Council's draft budget proposes investment in local communities and public facilities for 2026/27 and beyond. The £19.4 million "People First" budget was approved by full Council on 12 February.

The budget allows the council to continue to invest in leisure and community facilities that play an important role in everyday life and improve wellbeing.

New ongoing funding is to support community cohesion, backing local projects that bring people together, reduce isolation and strengthen community connections, particularly for residents who are vulnerable or at risk of being left behind. This is in addition to funding for the council's Community Hub which will continue to help residents with housing issues, cost-of-living pressures and access to advice and support when they need it most. CLTs and SODC nature restoration projects are also given support. Towns and villages across South Oxfordshire benefit from £590,000 in community grants, supporting locally led improvements such as community buildings, energy efficiency, local events and play equipment. In addition, the highly successful Community Infrastructure grants scheme would continue for another year with a budget of £750,000. The proposals also include funding to help deliver affordable housing and community space at Broadway in Didcot.

The budget continues the council's approach to climate action that focuses on practical local outcomes. A new Climate Action Fund is proposed for grants to community-based projects that cut energy use and emissions, alongside further investment to improve the efficiency of council owned buildings and facilities, helping to reduce running costs over time.

The budget includes plans to modernise public conveniences in Goring and Dorchester, with proposed improvements focused on accessibility, security, resilience to vandalism and bringing facilities up to modern standards.

Additional funding is also proposed to support the major Wheatley flood alleviation scheme, as well as other schemes that reduce flood risk for local homes and improve long-term resilience.

The budget also aims to continue the council's work supporting the local economy, helping businesses to start up, adapt and grow, and providing support for town centres, rural employers and the wider economy during a period of uncertainty.

Under the draft proposals, the district council's share of council tax would increase by £5 a year for a typical Band D household, bringing the average annual charge to £156.24, just £3 per week.

Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property Assets, said: "This budget is fundamentally about investing in the places where people live their everyday lives. From leisure centres and affordable housing to community spaces and play areas, we're putting funding directly into projects that strengthen local connections and improve wellbeing across South Oxfordshire."

In 2019/20, the SODC budgeted deficit was £(3.3)m, with capital reserves forecast to be empty with 2 years and revenue reserves forecast to be empty within 6 years. By contrast, SODC's

budget for 2026/27 is for a small surplus of £0.2m, with capital reserves forecast reducing (from £11.3m) to be £6.2m by 2030/31 and revenue reserves to be £33.0m by 2030/31. Overall that is quite a turnaround and has been achieved through intelligent management and whilst not cutting services as delivered to residents and whilst undertaking sound investment in facilities.

As set in the funding settlement by Government the Council Tax will go up by £5 for a Band D property. The 3 year settlement from Government does tighten in the two year after 2026-27. Future budgets may likely be constrained by the effect of LGR. The expectation is that the new council(s) will rule from April 2028 (2028/9).

Capital expenditure includes £10m for decarbonizing leisure centres and for a new learner pool at Didcot. (With a new leisure centre planned for NE Didcot £7.7m). Cornerstone Arts centre is also receiving decarbonisation expenditure. Decarbonising improves energy performance and cuts running costs – especially for swimming pools! Investment is planned for new bin vehicles and a new waste depot, together with car parks (incl new machines) and toilets refurbishments. Significant funding is set aside for up to 30 council homes and also permanent housing to provide rotating temporary housing. This saves a great deal of costs of temporary housing around addressing homelessness (B&B/hotels etc). Flood alleviation projects, Didcot Garden Town and Berinsfield Garden Village and the Grant schemes available to support community investment also go forward.

⇒ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/budget/south-oxfordshire-sets-out-people-first-budget-with-new-investment-in-communities-services-and-local-places/>

£1.5 million grant funding available for communities

Community organisations across South Oxfordshire can apply for more than £1.5 million in SODC grant funding to support projects that benefit residents and strengthen local communities.

⇒ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants-and-community-funding/over-1-5m-grants-funding-available-for-community-organisations/>

New electric waste vehicle to cut emissions

Following on from the first one in November 2025, a second new electric waste collection vehicle has been introduced by SODC which is expected to save around 13 tonnes of carbon emissions per year. The move supports the council's climate ambitions and transition to lower-emission operations.

⇒ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/climate-emergency/new-electric-waste-vehicle-will-save-councils-13-tonnes-of-carbon-emissions-per-year/>

Council leader responds to planning proposals

SODC leader Maggie Filipova-Rivers has commented on government proposals for strategic planning reforms, highlighting concerns about their impact on local decision-making and planning powers.

⇒ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/uncategorised/south-oxfordshire-leader-on-the-governments-strategic-planning-proposals/>

Mike Giles & Leigh Rawlins

District Councillors